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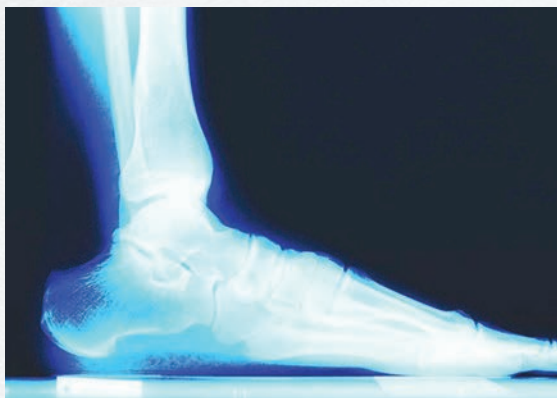
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# Signs of sports injury in young athletes



Youth sports attract scores of participants each year. An estimated 60 million children are registered to play youth sports in the United States.

The benefits to sports play are numerous, but the advantages to being active and competitive should not overshadow the need to be safe during sports play. Nearly 2.7 million young people are treated in the emergency room every year for sports-related injuries.

Parents, coaches and other adults working and volunteering in youth sports must learn to recognize signs that a player has become injured and address those injuries as soon as possible, but it can be hard to spot certain sports injuries. The following are some sports injuries and their symptoms to keep an eye out for at the next Little League game.

- **ACL tears:** Anterior cruciate ligament injuries occur when the ligament connecting the thigh bone and the shin bone tears after an athlete suddenly turns and changes direction, which is common in many sports. Pain is often immediate when suffering a torn ACL, and swelling can occur within several hours of being injured. The child may express that they heard or felt a pop in the knee area and are having trouble supporting their weight.

- **Internal abdominal injuries:** Internal injuries are less common than other sports injuries, but some studies suggest they are on the rise. Injuries to the kidneys, spleen and liver can produce pain in the abdomen. Blood in urine may be a sign of internal abdominal injury and needs to be addressed promptly.

- **Ankle sprain:** When the ankle twists or the foot rolls on its side, the ligaments that support the ankle joint can stretch and tear. Swelling and pain usually occur on the outside of the ankle within minutes to a few hours of the injury, depending on injury severity. Because it may be impossible to differentiate an ankle sprain from an ankle fracture without an x-ray, par-



ticularly if the pain in the ankle makes putting weight on it unlikely, a visit to an orthopedic doctor may be necessary.

- **Broken bones:** Bone fractures often happen during collisions with other players or from falls. Sometimes a fracture is obvious, but not always. A snap or grinding sound at the time of injury often signals a fracture, or if the athlete cannot bear weight or use the extremity after 15 minutes, an X-ray is likely needed.

- **Concussion:** A concussion is a mild traumatic brain injury that occurs when the brain is shaken or hit that can cause temporary changes in brain function. Signs of a concussion can include an athlete who appears dazed or stunned. There may be confusion and the youth could move clumsily and answer questions slowly. An inability to recall events before or after the head trauma, or losing consciousness even briefly, are additional signs of concussion. In older children and teens, nausea, vomiting, balance problems, light sensitivity, and headache also can occur.

- **Growth plate injuries:** Growth plates are soft cartilage at the end of bones like the arms, legs and fingers that are replaced by strong bones as children get older and stop growing. Growth plates are more susceptible to injury than the rest of the bone. A fracture may not be readily visible in a growth plate, but doctors can look for other signs. The Mayo Clinic says pain and tenderness and an inability to move the affected area

or put weight or pressure on the limb are signs of a growth plate injury. It's important to note that growth plate fractures occasionally can be caused by overuse from repetitive throwing or during sports training.

Young athletes should be encouraged to participate in sports, but adults should be mindful of common sports injuries and learn how to spot them.

## Did You Know?

Thousands of children go to emergency rooms for sports related injuries every year. The following numbers are an estimate of youth ages 5-14 treated in emergency rooms for injuries sustained during each sport, according to a 2009 study.

**Basketball:** More than 170,000 children.

**Baseball and softball:** Nearly 110,000 children. Baseball also has the highest fatality rate among sports, with three to four children dying from baseball injuries each year.

**Bicycling:** More than 200,000 children.

**Football:** Almost 215,000 children.

**Ice hockey:** More than 20,000 children.

**Skateboarding:** More than 66,000 children.

**Soccer:** About 88,000 children.

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# Your Peak Life: The 360° blueprint for unstoppable health & vitality



Most people think fitness is just what happens inside the gym, an hour of sweat, reps, and chasing numbers on the scale. But real health, the kind that gives you energy, confidence, and vitality for decades, isn't just about how you train — it's about how you live.

At PeakFit Studio, we call it Your Peak Life, a 360° approach to wellness built around four powerful pillars that work together to create lasting transformation: strength, mind, recovery, and fuel.

## **Pillar 1: Strength, the foundation of your power**

True strength isn't just physical it's your body's armor for life. Strength training builds muscle, protects your bones, boosts your metabolism and creates flexibility so you can move freely, whether that's keeping up with your kids, chasing your grandkids or tackling that mountain trail you once thought impossible. This isn't just fitness. This is freedom through strength.

## **Pillar 2: Mental well-being, the command center of your life**

Stress and pressure are inevitable, but suffering isn't. At PeakFit, you'll learn practical strategies to master your mindset, redirect stress, and cultivate clarity. Because when your mind is strong, your entire life expands.

## **Pillar 3: Recovery, the power of renewal**

You don't grow in the gym, you grow in recovery. Quality sleep is your body's reset button. It's where healing happens, where memory locks in, and where energy is rebuilt. Our infrared sauna, red light therapy, and recovery methods are designed to recharge you from the inside out.

## **Pillar 4: Nutrition, the fuel that drives it all**

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When you integrate all four pillars, you don't just look better, you live better. Energy becomes effortless, confidence becomes natural,



and health becomes who you are. Your best years aren't behind you — they're ahead of you.

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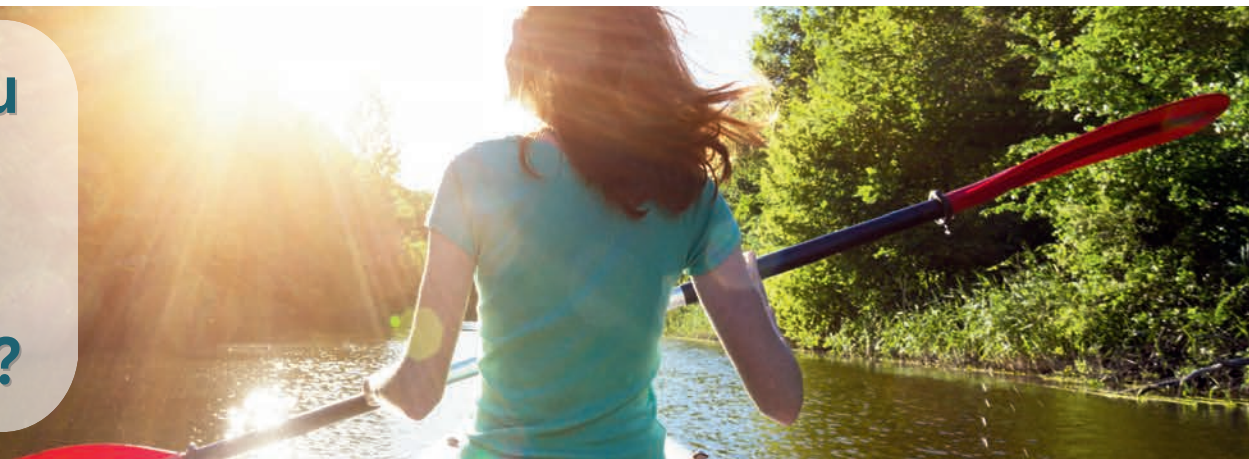


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# What Would You Do Without Constant Bathroom Trips?



"I was planning my entire life around where the nearest bathroom was," shares Kathy of Asheville. "I couldn't enjoy dinner with friends, take long walks, or even sleep through the night without interruption. The urgency was constant and embarrassing."

Kathy was suffering from Overactive Bladder Syndrome (OAB), a condition affecting millions of Americans. The frequent urges, nighttime bathroom trips, and fear of accidents can be physically and emotionally exhausting.

**The relentless urge to urinate is unbearable.**

**Planning every outing around bathroom locations becomes your reality.**

**Waking up multiple times each night leaves you exhausted.**

**Social events feel impossible - what if there's no bathroom nearby?**

**You spend your entire day anxious about the next urgent trip. Intimacy and confidence suffer.**

"I tried medications that gave me terrible dry mouth and constipation. My doctor said I just had to live with it or consider surgery," Kathy recalls.

**Then Kathy found Dr. Autum Kirgan, DACM, C.SMA, L.Ac of South Slope Acupuncture & Wellness.**

By blending the ancient wisdom of acupuncture with cutting-edge electroacupuncture technology, Dr. Autum has designed a natural, non-surgical solution for overactive bladder: Percutaneous Tibial Nerve Stimulation (PTNS).

"PTNS uses gentle electrical stimulation at a specific acupuncture point near the ankle to help 'retrain' the bladder's overactive patterns," explains Dr. Kirgan. "Research shows that 60-80% of patients experience significant improvement. Studies even demonstrate PTNS can be more effective than common OAB medications - without the side effects."

**Kathy, like so many others, was told medications or surgery were her only options. But PTNS offered a third path.**

After completing her PTNS treatment program, Kathy is already experiencing life-changing results. "I'm sleeping through the night again. I went to a concert last week and actually enjoyed the show instead of counting bathroom trips. I feel like I have my life back! Dr. Kirgan has given me freedom I thought was gone forever."

The number of treatments needed will vary from person to person and can only be determined after a detailed evaluation. If you or someone you love is suffering from overactive bladder, call 828-575-5904 to schedule a consultation with Dr. Kirgan and her South Slope Acupuncture & Wellness team.

They are waiting for your call.

If you've missed too many events because of bathroom anxiety, or passed on travel plans with friends because you're afraid you can't manage, it is time to call South Slope Acupuncture & Wellness.

Our providers have been helping the Asheville community using evidence-based integrative medicine for over ten years. Specializing in conditions that others have deemed 'difficult to treat,' we consistently generate unparalleled results.

Visit [www.southslopeacupuncture.com](http://www.southslopeacupuncture.com) or call 828-575-5904 to learn more



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# The athlete's guide to dry needling vs. acupuncture

By Dr. Autum Kirgan

If you're an athlete dealing with pain, muscle tension, or performance issues, you've likely heard about both acupuncture and dry needling as potential treatments. While both involve thin needles and can provide significant relief, they're actually quite different approaches with distinct advantages for different situations.

At South Slope Acupuncture & Wellness, Dr. Autum Kirgan is uniquely positioned as the only practitioner in the Asheville area with extensive training in both Sports Medicine Acupuncture® and dry needling. This dual expertise allows us to choose the most effective approach for each athlete's specific needs—or combine both for optimal results.

Acupuncture is a 3,000-year-old system of medicine that views the body as an interconnected network of pathways and channel systems. Modern research has revealed that these ancient channel systems closely correspond to fascial networks and neurovascular bundles & pathways throughout the body. When we insert needles at specific acupuncture points, we're not just targeting the area of pain—we're working to restore communication via the nervous system to the brain and balance throughout your entire fascial-neurovascular network.

Dry needling, also known as trigger point dry needling or intramuscular manual therapy, is a modern technique that specifically targets trigger points—those tight, painful knots in your muscles and their surrounding fascial sheaths. The goal is immediate relief of muscle tension and restoration of normal fascial gliding through direct mechanical intervention.

Recent research has shown that acupuncture points often correspond to areas where fascial planes converge or where major neurovascular bundles penetrate the fascia. This explains why traditional acupuncture can have such far-reaching effects — we're essentially



accessing the body's primary communication networks.

Dry needling works through direct mechanical disruption of trigger point physiology. The needle insertion creates a localized inflammatory response that promotes healing while mechanically breaking up adhesions in the fascial matrix around dysfunctional muscle fibers.

But there really is no dry needling vs acupuncture as they both are equally beneficial and highly effective under the care of qualified and properly trained professionals.

If you're looking to enhance overall athletic performance, acupuncture's approach through the fascial-neurovascular system is ideal. Research shows acupuncture can improve your VO2 max and cardiovascular efficiency, reaction time and coordination, mental focus and concentration, and sleep quality and recovery rates.

Athletes benefit from acupuncture's ability to address underlying fascial network dysfunction, helping to eliminate chronic low back pain, recurring hamstring or calf strains, persistent shoulder impingement, ongoing IT band syndrome, and frequent muscle cramps.

Target specific myofascial problems with dry needling while optimizing

overall fascial-neurovascular communication with acupuncture. Use acupuncture to enhance overall network function and dry needling to address specific fascial restrictions.

## Acupuncture Sensations

- Mild tingling or warmth at needle sites as fascial networks activate
- Deep relaxation during treatment from autonomic nervous system regulation
- Improved sensation of flow through fascial-neurovascular pathways
- Minimal to no discomfort during insertion due to gentle network stimulation

## Dry Needling Sensations

- Brief, sharp sensation during trigger point release and fascial disruption
- Muscle twitching as knots release and normal fascial gliding restores
- Immediate relief of tension through mechanical myofascial changes
- Possible mild soreness for 24-48 hours post-treatment as fascial healing occurs

## Making the Right Choice for Your Situation

Acupuncture is the best choice to optimize overall fascial-neurovascular

network function and deal with chronic, systemic fascial dysfunction.

If you're experiencing stress, sleep, or autonomic nervous system issues, or you want to prevent future injuries through improved network communication, acupuncture could be a good option.

But, choose dry needling to address acute, specific myofascial problems, localized trigger points or fascial adhesions.

Dry needling can also help provide quick relief for immediate fascial restrictions, active injury rehabilitation, or targeted myofascial intervention on a short timeline.

Consider combining the two treatments for both acute myofascial symptoms and chronic network dysfunction, comprehensive care addressing local and systemic fascial issues, or if you're a serious athlete requiring optimal network function and injury prevention.

Whether you're dealing with acute myofascial restrictions, chronic fascial network dysfunction, or looking to optimize your entire neurovascular system for peak performance, the key is working with a practitioner who understands both approaches and their effects on your body's interconnected systems.

South Slope Acupuncture & Wellness often combines both approaches for maximum benefit, addressing both local myofascial dysfunction and systemic fascial-neurovascular network optimization.

*Dr. Autum Kirgan is a Doctor of Acupuncture & Chinese Medicine and the only practitioner in the Asheville area with extensive training in both Sports Medicine Acupuncture® and dry needling. South Slope Acupuncture & Wellness specializes in evidence-based integrative medicine for chronic complex pain conditions, sports injuries, and performance optimization, assessment and treatment.*



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## The basics of holistic therapy



what is necessary and devises a plan to treat a patient's condition. Holistic therapy is typically more collaborative and characterized by health care professionals and patients working together to develop an individualized treatment plan that may include traditional approaches or alternative therapies.

Holistic therapy offers people an option to live healthier, but with so many modern healthcare options available, how does holistic therapy size up?

Holistic therapy is an approach to health and healing that addresses the mind, body and spirit. The goal of holistic therapy is to treat all aspects of a person's life, including their mental and physical health.

In a more traditional health care scenario, a doctor typically diagnoses

Some examples of holistic therapy include meditation, yoga, and cognitive behavioral therapy, as well as acupuncture, massage, and even hypnosis.

*At Hope Within, therapists prioritize reaching the root cause of one's mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual challenges for true and total healing. Hope Within's holistic route is based on research, offered through therapeutic services and community events, and partnering with available, local resources.*

## Tips for healthier baking

Baking is a beloved pastime for many people that can certainly produce delicious results, but oftentimes baked goods are not the healthiest fare.

Many baked goods are high in sugar and fat. Overweight and obesity are tied to the consumption of fat-rich, high-calorie foods. Those who want to bake can make certain modifications to keep health a priority.

- **Replace butter and cream:** Look for recipes that feature healthier oils instead of butter and cream, which are high in saturated fat.

- **Prepare bite-sized desserts:** Portion sizes should be carefully monitored to ensure one doesn't go overboard enjoying baked goods.

- **Incorporate healthy ingredients:** Balance out baked goods by improving the nutrient profile with ingredi-

ents like shredded or pureed apple, banana, carrot, and pumpkin.

- **Try alternative flours:** Rather than white flour, consider whole-wheat flour as a substitution. Chickpea or almond flour can boost protein without adding carbs.

- **Reduce the sugar:** Experiment with reducing the amount of sugar in recipes and opt for "healthier" sugars, such as honey or maple syrup.

Minor substitutions can make baked goods healthier without losing the fun of baking.



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# Sleep could be the secret behind skin health



Your skin is often the first place to show the impact of daily stress and poor sleep. While a hectic schedule or restless night might seem harmless in the short term, they can play a major role in skin problems over time.

When the body is under stress, it produces larger quantities of cortisol, a hormone that will lead

to increased oil production in the skin. This excess oil clogs pores, creating acne breakouts.

Stress can also trigger conditions like psoriasis, rosacea, and eczema by inducing higher levels of inflammation in the body. Many people even notice that their skin takes longer to heal or is more sensitive while they are experiencing stress.

Sleep is the body's built-in reset button, and the skin reaps the rewards of this downtime. Through deep sleep cycles, blood flow to the skin is greater, delivering oxygen and nutrients to cells and repairing damage accumulated throughout the day.

Without sufficient sleep, skin can be dull, dehydrated, and more susceptible to fine lines and wrinkles.

Dark circles under the eyes are frequently one of the first signs of inadequate sleep. With time, sleep loss can lower the production of collagen, which tightens skin and gives it its youthful look.

Stress reduction and sleep prioritization are not just lifestyle choices, they are healthy aspects of skin care. Small changes, such as setting routines at bedtime, consistent physical exercise, and meditation, can reduce cortisol production and improve the body's repair function.

If you are struggling with acne, irritation, or premature aging that seems linked to stress or lack of sleep, a dermatologist can help create a personalized treatment plan.

*Visit Highlands Dermatology to explore its variety of services to assist your skin care journey.*



## Meet Traci Knop

Highlands Dermatology is delighted to welcome Traci T. Knop, MSN, FNP-BC, to the team. Traci brings over 30 years of clinical experience and a warm, personalized approach to skincare. Certified by the American Nurses Credentialing Center and a member of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, she joined the practice in July 2025.

Her nursing career began in West Palm Beach, Florida, in 1991. After relocating to Franklin in 1997, she spent eight years in Surgical Services at Angel Medical Center. Traci earned her BSN from Western Carolina University in 2013 and her MSN from the University of Cincinnati in 2015, specializing as a Family Nurse Practitioner. Before joining Highlands Dermatology, she practiced in Gastroenterology and Internal Medicine across Western North Carolina. Traci and her husband, Daniel, live in Franklin and have two adult children. She enjoys baking, the outdoors, and adventures with their dogs.

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# How cold weather affects sinus health



how our sinuses function, from their ability to filter air to their production of protective mucus.

Understanding this seasonal impact on sinus health helps explain how to better protect the respiratory system during the cold season.

While indoor heating helps keep your home warm, it also reduces humidity levels, which can dry out the sinuses even more. Using a humidifier or staying hydrated can help counteract some of these effects by adding moisture back into the air and keeping your sinuses from drying out too much.

Frequent temperature changes can also play a role in sinus discomfort. Moving between cold outdoor air and warm indoor environments can cause the blood vessels in your nasal passages to expand and contract quickly, sometimes leading to a stuffy or runny nose.

Taking small steps, like covering your nose when heading outside and keeping indoor air at a comfortable humidity level, can help support sinus health during colder months.



Warm beverages like herbal tea or broth can also provide relief by soothing the nasal passages and promoting natural mucus production.

Regularly rinsing your sinuses with a saline solution can help clear out irritants and keep them moisturized. Avoiding excessive exposure to heating vents and keeping your living space clean can reduce dust and allergens that may contribute to sinus irritation.

Understanding how cold weather impacts your sinuses can help you take the right steps to manage your health and stay comfortable throughout the season.

*If you're noticing persistent sinus issues or experiencing symptoms that don't seem to ease despite your best efforts, it may be time to consult with an ENT doctor. The team at Mountain Ear, Nose & Throat Associates is ready and willing to help.*



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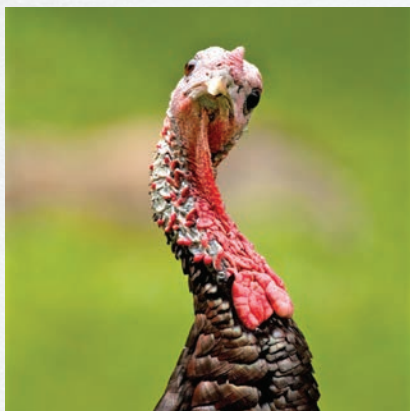
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# Don't be a turkey this November: *Thanksgiving safety tips*



By Keely Knopp

Celebration, family fun and the promise of a big meal often take center stage around the holidays, but it's important to remember that things still can (and do) go awry — even during the most joyous of festivities.

Before gathering around the table this Thanksgiving, take some time to review these helpful safety tips, so that you can add “an accident-free holiday” to your gratitude list.

- If you're in on the cooking, stay in the kitchen and remain attentive to items on the stove. Set timers for items in the oven, and ensure all stovetop burners are turned off and cleared of debris when not in use.

- Keep young children away from hot stoves, knives and open flames.

- Keep a fire extinguisher near the kitchen. Baking soda can also be an effective way to extinguish small kitchen fires.

- Keep the floor clear to avoid tripping hazards.

- Make sure your smoke alarms are working properly.

- Don't drink and drive. Thanksgiving has an increased risk of alcohol-related fatalities. In 2019, 29% of Thanksgiving fatalities involved an alcohol-impaired driver.

- Know basic first aid and CPR. With

all the food Thanksgiving often brings, there's an increased risk of choking. Knowing how to render basic first aid and CPR for these emergencies can save lives.

- Be careful and cautious while putting up decorations, and never decorate alone while using a ladder.

Remember, despite all your best efforts, accidents can still happen.

*If you do end up needing medical assistance this holiday season, come visit one of Mercy Urgent Care's eight Western North Carolina locations.*



## Not just sweet: *The nutritional benefits of sweet potatoes*



Sweet potatoes may immediately conjure images of Thanksgiving dinner tables, where the popular tuber often is featured during dinner and dessert. The good news for people aspiring to eat healthy this fall is that sweet potatoes pack quite a nutritional punch.

One cup of baked sweet potatoes provides 213% of the recommended daily minimum value of vitamin A. Vitamin A promotes normal vision and a healthy immune system, and is vital for reproduction, growth and development.

Sweet potatoes are high in the antioxidant vitamin C. Antioxidants have been linked to stronger immune systems and lower risk for diseases such as heart disease and cancer. In

addition, vitamin C is vital for healing wounds and repairing and maintaining bones and teeth.

Sweet potatoes contain two types of fiber which remain in the digestive tract and promote a healthy gut. These fibers can also keep cells along the intestinal lining healthy and strong.

Vitamins C and E in sweet potatoes can help to prevent or delay the development of cataracts and macular degeneration, which can compromise vision.

The next time mashed potatoes or french fries are on the menu, consider substituting sweet potatoes, which pack a flavorful punch and offer notable nutritional advantages compared to other types of tubers.

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# Walking: a perfect exercise for seniors

Aging changes the human body in myriad ways. But exercise is one thing the human body needs regardless of how old it is.

Some exercises are better suited for particular demographics than others. Walking, for example, is an ideal activity for seniors, who may be surprised to learn just how beneficial a daily stroll can be.

Regular brisk walking strengthens bones and muscles. Intensity is important when walking to improve muscle strength. Raising your heart rate during workouts for at least 40 minutes four to five days per week can help build muscle strength. It's important that seniors walking to build muscle strength exhibit more intensity during a workout walk than they might during a recreational stroll.



Walking can help seniors maintain a healthy weight. Overweight and obesity are risk factors for a host of chronic illnesses, including diabetes and heart disease. Walking can help seniors keep pounds off. In fact, a 155-pound person burns around 133 calories walking for 30 minutes at a 17-minutes-per-mile

pace. A slight increase in intensity to 15 minutes per mile can help that same person burn an additional 42 calories.

It's long been known that walking is a great way for seniors to reduce their risk for cardiovascular disease. Walking more than four hours per week can significantly reduce the risk of being

hospitalized for cardiovascular disease. How significant is that reduction? People age 70 and older who walk an additional 500 steps per day have a 14% lower risk for heart disease, stroke or heart failure. In addition, walking also helps seniors reduce their risk for colon cancer and diabetes.

Walking also boosts mental health. Replacing one hour of sitting with one hour of a moderate activity like brisk walking can have a measurable and positive effect on mental health.

Walking can benefit all people, but might be uniquely beneficial for seniors. Walking is free, which undoubtedly appeals to seniors living on fixed incomes, and it's also a moderate intensity activity that won't tax seniors' bodies. Such benefits suggest walking and seniors are a perfect match.



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# How to maintain hearing aids in cold weather

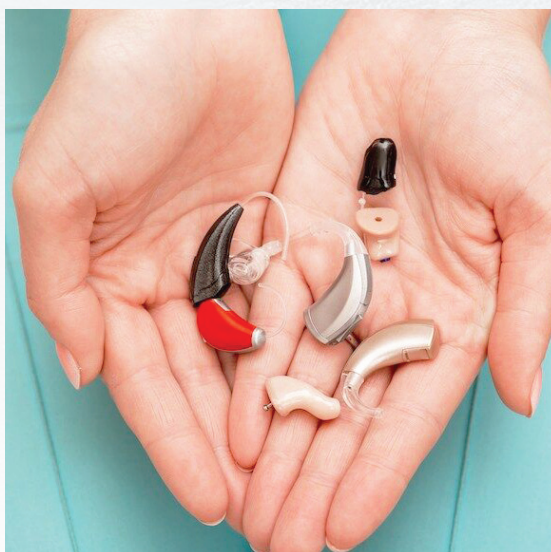
Winter's chill brings along a variety of changes and some may even influence your hearing aids' battery life and functions.

Cold weather can drain batteries faster and expose your hearing aids to moisture from sudden temperature changes, which might cause performance issues.

Preserving your hearing aid's battery life is about more than just ensuring your devices run smoothly; it's about keeping your daily activities and social interactions uninterrupted despite the dropping temperatures.

Most hearing aids use zinc-air batteries, which depend on oxygen to function properly. Cold temperatures make this process less efficient, causing the batteries to drain faster than usual.

Additionally, extreme cold can cause the battery's internal components to contract and can disrupt its ability to deliver power. Rapid temperature changes, like moving from the outdoors to a heated indoor space, can also create condensation on the battery or within the hearing aid. This moisture can lead to inconsistencies or a shorter functional life.



Despite these challenges, with the right precautions you can ensure your hearing aids continue working optimally.

First, try to keep your hearing aids as warm as

possible. When you're outside in the cold, wear a hat or headband over your ears to provide an extra layer of protection. Avoid storing them in cold places like an outer pocket or car glove box – instead, keep them close to your body where they can benefit from your body heat.

Second, consider using a dry-aid kit overnight to remove any potential moisture build-up after winter activities or temperature changes.

Finally, always carry spare batteries with you during winter outings. Having replacements at hand ensures that you won't be left without functioning hearing aids.

By taking proactive steps to care for your hearing aids in cold weather, you can minimize disruptions and keep your devices working at their best.

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# UNC Health Pardee Expands Robotic Surgery Offerings

Recognizing that surgery can be an anxious and overwhelming experience, UNC Health Pardee is committed to ensuring patients have high-quality care and positive outcomes. Recently, Pardee has expanded its surgical offerings by adding four leading-edge robotic systems, providing patients with a safer, smoother recovery and overall improved surgical experience.

The investment provides more options in specialized services, ensuring patients and providers have multiple resources to turn to when surgical care is needed.

The systems include the da Vinci® Surgical System, Depuy™ VELYS™ Robotic-Assisted Solution, Globus ExcelsiusGPS™, and the Monarch™ Platform — each bringing an increased level of precision, safety, and recovery potential to different surgical specialties.

***This advanced technology benefits patients by offering:***

- Shorter hospital stays
- Faster recovery times
- Smaller incisions and less scarring
- Lower risk of complications

“Robotic surgery allows our surgeons to perform minimally invasive procedures through small incisions and with extreme precision and dexterity,” said Dr. John Kogoy, general surgeon, Pardee Surgical Associates. “This translates into a better recovery experience for the patient and more consistent outcomes.”

## Meet the four robots reshaping surgery at Pardee

### ***da Vinci® Surgical System***

The da Vinci robot is widely used in gynecology, urology, colorectal, and general surgery. With tiny wristed

instruments and a high-definition 3D camera, the system allows surgeons to operate with a range of motion and precision that exceeds the human hand. UNC Health Pardee is the first in the region to use the most advanced 5.0 system.

da Vinci offers a minimally invasive option for many procedures that traditionally required large incisions and longer recovery.

### ***Globus ExcelsiusGPS™***

Spine surgery demands the highest levels of accuracy, and Pardee now meets that challenge with the Globus ExcelsiusGPS robotic system. Dr. Kelsey Walsh, a neurosurgeon with Pardee NeuroSpine Associates, uses this robot to perform neurosurgical spine procedures, allowing for precise navigation and placement of hardware while minimizing damage to surrounding tissues.

“Using this robotic navigational system allows the surgical team to see a 3D model of the spine so that we can create a customized plan for each patient,” said Dr. Walsh. “This technology increases the accuracy and efficiency of hardware placement and less radiation exposure to the patient.”

For patients with spinal stenosis, fractures, or degenerative disc disease, robotic-assisted spine surgery can mean less blood loss, reduced operating time, and faster return to mobility.

### ***Depuy VELYS™ Robotic-Assisted Solution***

For patients facing knee replacement surgery, the Depuy VELYS system offers next-generation support. This robot works alongside orthopedic surgeons to ensure implants are placed with a level of alignment and balance that manual surgery can’t always guarantee.

This can mean better long-term function, increased mobility and less pain after surgery — helping patients return to their daily activities sooner and with more confidence.

### ***Monarch™ Platform by Auris Health***

Pardee is also enhancing its ability to detect lung cancer with the Monarch robotic bronchoscopy system. This advanced tool enables pulmonologists to target small nodules deep within the lung with



exceptional accuracy — essential for early diagnosis and biopsy.

The earlier lung cancer is caught, the better the chances of survival. Monarch provides patients in our region with access to this life-saving technology, eliminating the need to travel for care.



## Benefits for patients, and surgeons too

While the technology is designed with patient care in mind, it also enhances the experience for Pardee’s surgical teams. The improved visibility, control, and ergonomics reduce surgeon fatigue and allow for more complex cases to be handled locally.

“For decades, we put every knee replacement in the same position, even though we know every patient is different. We simply didn’t have the technology to do it in a patient-specific way,” said Dr. Nic Gay, orthopedic surgeon, Pardee Orthopedics and Sports Medicine. “Now with Velys, we can measure every patient in the operating room and put the knee or hip replacement in a way that is specific to each patient.”

## A commitment to excellence

The investment in robotic surgical systems reflects UNC Health Pardee’s commitment to improving the lives of the communities we serve. For many, this means less travel, lower costs, and the comfort of recovering near family and friends.

As the population in Western North Carolina continues to grow and age, the demand for advanced surgical care is rising. Pardee’s leadership in robotic-assisted surgery positions it to meet this demand and ensure that patients can count on high-quality, leading-edge care now and in the years to come.

To learn more about robotic surgery at UNC Health Pardee, visit [UNCHealthPardee.org](http://UNCHealthPardee.org).



# Haywood Regional heralded for top-notch stroke care

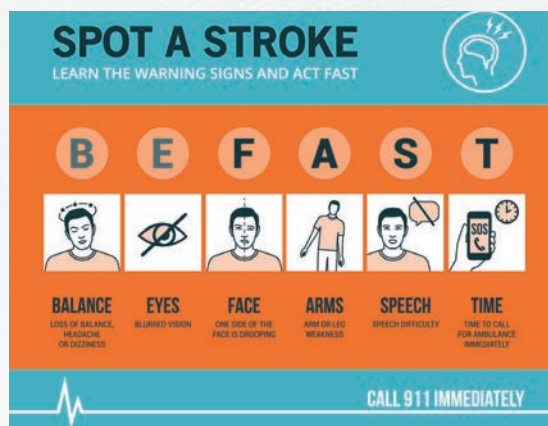
Haywood Regional Medical Center has earned top marks for its treatment and care of stroke patients from the Joint Commission's Gold Seal of Approval and the American Stroke Association's Heart-Check mark.

"Stroke care is complex and time-sensitive, requiring seamless teamwork at every step. This certification validates the systems and practices our team has put in place to provide the safest, most effective care for our patients and families," said HRMC's chief nursing officer LaCrystal Gordon.

Primary Stroke Center Certification recognizes hospitals that meet the highest national standards for stroke care. It affirms that evidence-based, around-the-clock treatment is provided and that systems are in place to deliver rapid, coordinated care when every minute matters.

For HRMC, that means patients arriving in the emergency department are evaluated and treated through streamlined stroke protocols, ensuring timely diagnosis and intervention.

The certification followed a rigorous onsite review in which Joint Commission surveyors evaluated the hospital's compliance with national standards. The visit



included direct observations and interviews with staff across multiple departments.

Preparation for the review drew on collaboration across the hospital, with leaders and staff from emergency care, nursing, clinical education, patient safety, and other areas working together. Their efforts focused on strengthening policies, providing training, and putting systems in place to meet national benchmarks. That work also emphasized tracking outcomes and care processes to ensure improvements are sustained through ongoing monitoring and staff education.

"Earning this certification reflects the dedication of our physicians, nurses and staff who are committed to delivering timely, high-quality stroke care," said HRMC's CEO Sue Shugart. "It affirms that patients in Haywood County can receive nationally recognized stroke services close to home."

Someone in the United States experiences a stroke every 40 seconds. Recognizing the signs of stroke early can save lives. Use the BE FAST method to check for stroke symptoms:

**B – Balance:** Sudden loss of balance or coordination

**E – Eyes:** Sudden blurred or double vision or loss of vision in one or both eyes

**F – Face:** Facial drooping or uneven smile

**A – Arms:** Arm weakness or numbness

**S – Speech:** Slurred or difficult speech

**T – Time:** Time to call 911 immediately if any of these symptoms are present

*Haywood Regional Medical Center is also an accredited Chest Pain Center, underscoring its readiness to respond to life-threatening emergencies. Learn more about stroke and heart care, prevention, and available services by visiting [MyHaywoodRegional.com](http://MyHaywoodRegional.com).*

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# Deerfield Episcopal Retirement Community achieves carbon-free energy milestone

In a world increasingly conscious of the environmental impact of energy consumption, Deerfield has made a significant stride towards sustainability by transitioning to 100% carbon-free energy.

Through a strategic partnership and the procurement of Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs), Deerfield has not only reduced its carbon footprint, but has also set a remarkable example for communities and organizations aiming for greener practices.

At the heart of this accomplishment lies a commitment to environmental stewardship and a vision for a more sustainable future. Deerfield receives its power supply from Duke Energy, historically, with a mix of 51% carbon-free energy — including renewable and nuclear power.

However, recognizing the importance of further reducing carbon emissions, Deerfield took proactive steps to bridge the gap towards complete carbon neutrality.

Deerfield was able to achieve this goal by purchasing



the remaining 49% of its energy usage through the acquisition of 3,724 Renewable Energy Certificates sourced from a solar project off site.

The significance of this achievement extends far

beyond mere statistics. By retiring these solar RECs, Deerfield has effectively prevented the emission of 5,735,435 pounds of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) into the atmosphere. To put this into perspective, it's equivalent to the emissions from 292,737 gallons of gasoline or 2,867,107 pounds of coal burned.

Deerfield's transition to 100% carbon-free energy showcases the tangible impact that proactive measures can have in mitigating climate change and fostering a more sustainable world. As the global community continues to grapple with environmental challenges, initiatives like this demonstrate that positive change is not only possible, but also within reach.

Through dedication, collaboration, and a shared commitment to sustainability, Deerfield has proven that the path to a greener future begins with decisive action.

*For more information about Deerfield's commitment to sustainability, visit our Environmental Sustainability page or contact Keith Einsmann at [keinsmann@deerfieldwnc.org](mailto:keinsmann@deerfieldwnc.org).*

## WELLNESS ROOTED IN COMMUNITY

At Deerfield, whole-person wellness is at the heart of community life. Residents enjoy easy access to personalized healthcare, fitness opportunities, and supportive services, all just minutes from downtown Asheville in the heart of Western North Carolina. As a faith-based community for adults 61 and older, Deerfield offers peace of mind with on-site health services and a strong culture of care. Whether it's a morning swim, a wellness workshop, or compassionate care when it's needed most, every day is an opportunity to live fully, supported by a team that knows you well.

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# Essentials for women's health and fitness

Women's fitness often comes with its own set of challenges and misconceptions, but strength training can bring long-term health benefits.

Genetically, women tend to have lower muscle mass, particularly in the upper body. This is because estrogen, the primary anabolic hormone in women, leads to less muscle growth compared to men. Additionally, as estrogen levels decrease with age, women may experience a quicker decline in joint and muscular health.

One common misconception about female strength training is that women's bodies can't increase muscle mass significantly. While it's true that average female genetics typically don't allow for extreme muscle hypertrophy, the muscle-to-nerve response times, responsible for over 30% of strength gains, are just as quick in women as in men.



Women are generally smaller in stature and have lower bone mineral mass, making them more susceptible to joint degeneration and related injuries. This underscores the importance of strength training for women of all ages. With

the rise of obesity, particularly among Western women, the need for effective strength training is more critical than ever.

Strength training offers numerous benefits from improving joint health,

to enhancing bone mineral density, and helping women develop a strong physique.

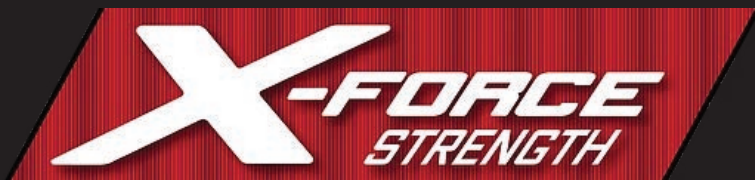
For optimal results, women should focus slightly more on upper body workouts, targeting the core, shoulders, and back. Starting with two workouts every 10 days is recommended, eventually reducing to one workout per week once desired strength levels are achieved.

Increasing muscle mass not only enhances strength but also boosts metabolism, aiding in fat loss even at rest. Incorporating strength training into your fitness routine can lead to improved flexibility, better muscle tone, and overall enhanced health and well-being.

Don't let misconceptions hold you back; strength training is a powerful tool for women aiming to lead healthier, fitter lives.

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# 5 questions seniors can ask their doctors during routine checkups



Seniors may not have the same busy schedules they did when they were younger and juggling an assortment of personal and professional responsibilities. But one constant on many seniors' schedules is routine trips to see their doctors.

Trips to see primary care physicians and specialists are part of many seniors' monthly routines. Such appointments can ensure seniors stay healthy throughout their golden years, especially when patients remain vigilant and engage with their physicians during office visits. One of the most effective ways to remain engaged is to ask questions during each

appointment.

The following are five queries seniors can keep in mind as they prepare for their next appointment.

- ***Is my blood pressure high?***

High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, has been linked to a host of health problems, including cardiovascular disease, stroke, kidney disease, and diminished vision.

- ***What can I do to lower my blood pressure?***

If doctors discover high blood pressure, ask for a detailed plan to lower it, including physical activities and dietary recommendations.

- ***Do I need to change my medications?***

Seniors who use prescription medications regularly should ask their doctors if there's anything they need to change or look out for.

- ***Can I do anything to improve mobility?***

35% of persons age 70 and over live with mobility limitations. Reduced mobility can increase risk for falls and hospitalization and lead to a reduction in quality of life. When visiting

their physicians, seniors can report any mobility issues and ask what they can do to address them and prevent them from progressing.

- ***Do I need additional health screenings?***

Screening saves lives, even if exams can sometimes be inconvenient, if not unpleasant. Seniors can use each doctor's appointment as an opportunity to discuss screenings and determine if there's any additional tests they should be getting each year.



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**Open enrollment is 11/1 - 1/15, but in-person phone and virtual enrollment appointments are available year-round**

The project described was supported by Funding Opportunity number CMS-NAV-24-001 from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The contents provided are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of HHS or any of its agencies. GetCoveredWNC serves WNC with support from the Dogwood Health Trust, and Haywood County with support from Haywood Healthcare Foundation.



# What to do with leftover Halloween candy

What can be better than spending a day with friends, decked out in costume as you accumulate a mountain of sweet treats? But sometimes that cache of candy is more than a person can consume in a lifetime.

When October rolls into November and Thanksgiving is on the horizon, few people want to be staring at a witch's cauldron full of chocolate bars.

Rather than be wasteful and throw it away, they can utilize that candy in many different ways. Some uses may be healthier than others, but sharing your candy creations can help keep the sugar rush at bay.

- **S'mores:** Turn miniature chocolate bars and candy bars into a campfire treat. Use whatever chocolate based candy you have in the middle of toasted marshmallows and graham crackers for a fireside snack.

- **Confectionary pizza:** Bake pizza dough on a pan with no toppings. Then spread a layer of



peanut butter or hazelnut spread on top and add various candies to the pizza slices. Options include chocolate candies, miniature pretzels, marshmallows, or gummy candies.

- **Stained glass cookies:** Turn hard candies into works of art by filling sugar cookie dough cutouts with hard candies in the middle. Bake to see the candy transform.

- **Candy bark:** Melt down any chocolate you may have and spread it on a baking sheet.

Sprinkle chopped up leftover candy on top and allow to cool. Break into pieces for a homemade chocolate bark.

- **Gingerbread house:** Save the candy in a zip-top bag for freshness and reserve for decorating gingerbread houses around the holidays.

- **Birthday piñata:** If there is a birthday on the horizon, use the Halloween candy to stuff the piñata.

- **Parade route:** Veteran's Day parades are held each November. Save your candy to be tossed out to the crowd by those marching in the parade.

- **Donate:** Various organizations will gather and ship leftover candy to troops stationed overseas or donate the goods to first responders, veterans and others.

It's fun to gather treats on Halloween. But when the collected candy is simply too much to eat, there are various ways to put it to good use.



Thanks to the vibrant foliage and crisp air, fall is a prime time to lace up one's boots and hit the trails.

Beyond the opportunity to check out the amazing foliage displays synonymous with this time of year, spending time outdoors in fall provides various health benefits. Hiking can improve mental well-being, enhance balance and strengthen muscles.

As with any hiking trip, it is key to plan ahead to enjoy a safe and enjoyable adventure this fall.

## Tips to enjoy WNC's fall hiking

- **Layer your clothing:** Fall weather can be unpredictable and dramatic temperature fluctuations can occur between morning and afternoon. The trick is layering clothing to provide comfort and safety. Start with a moisture-wicking base layer, add an insulating layer like fleece for warmth, and top it with a waterproof and windproof outer shell. Then you can adjust your clothing as conditions change.

- **Wear proper footwear:** Opt for sturdy hiking shoes or boots with significant ankle support and excellent traction. Fallen leaves, rain or early-season ice can make paths slippery. Wool socks (not cotton) will wick away moisture

and provide warmth even when damp.

- **Mind the daylight:** As fall inches closer to winter, daylight hours diminish rapidly. It's easy to underestimate how quickly dusk will arrive. Plan your route to account for your pace so you can be off the trail well before sunset. Pack a flashlight or headlamp just in case.

- **Mind the habitat:** Anytime you hike you should be mindful of the natural settings around you. Stick to the trails so you do not disturb delicate vegetation. And never feed wild animals. Remember to dispose of trash properly and always take out what you bring in.

- **Stay fueled and hydrated:** De-



spite the cooler temperatures of fall, dehydration may occur as the body loses fluid through exertion and respiration. Pack plenty of water and take sips regularly. Bring along energy-rich snacks like protein bars, trail mix and dried fruit to maintain energy levels throughout the excursion.

Fall hiking trips enable people to immerse themselves in the stunning beauty of the season while also getting some exercise and enjoying ample fresh air.

# Hospice myths and questions answered



## **Does involving hospice care mean we are giving up hope or that a person will die soon?**

As an illness progresses most people hope for comfort, good pain and symptom control, and quality of life — all things that hospice care provides. And studies show that involving hospice earlier can help your loved one live better and, for some, even longer than anticipated.

## **My loved one worries that hospice will administer medications to sedate them.**

Hospice care does provide symptom relief, but many families say the emotional and spiritual support were the biggest help in allowing them to live life more fully during their remaining time together.

## **Doesn't being in hospice care mean you can't have other medical care?**

Hospice care focuses on comfort rather than a cure, but it doesn't prevent you from seeking care for other illnesses or conditions. For example, if your loved one has glaucoma, they could still seek treatment for that with their medical provider.

## **If we start hospice care, can we stop it?**

You can choose to stop receiving care from a hospice program, for any reason, without penalty. You may resume hospice care in the future when the time is right for you.

## **When do I call hospice?**

It's recommended that as soon as your healthcare provider determines your

loved one may have 6 months or less to live, you call hospice.

*Since 1979, Four Seasons has been providing serious illness care to Western North Carolina. As an award-winning, nationally recognized non-profit organization, Four Seasons is known for fast response times, compassionate care, and for making our patients a priority over all else.*



Below, find answers to common hospice myths and questions.

## **Is hospice a place?**

Hospice is not a place, but rather an approach to care designed to enhance life and can be provided wherever you call home. This could be a private residence, assisted living community, or nursing center.

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## Be more active by overcoming back pain



Back pain is one of the most common conditions across the globe. Low back pain is the single leading cause of disability around the world, and 80% of adults in the United States experience low back pain at some point in their lives.

There are many reasons why back pain can occur. Muscle strain, arthritis, herniated discs, and other conditions can contribute to back pain. But there are also ways to prevent and alleviate back pain and its potential long-term effects.

### Get moving

Although moving around may be the last thing on the minds of people experiencing back pain, remaining physically active is essential to good health. Plus, movement actually is the best medicine for back pain itself. Exercise alone reduces the risk of back pain by 35%. Low-impact activities like walking, swimming and yoga help to strengthen muscles, improve flexibility and reduce pain in the process. This can be beneficial to seniors who find low-impact activities are best for their health.

### Strengthen your core

Sitting for long periods of time

can contribute to back problems. Americans sit for an average of 10 hours a day, often with poor posture and non-engaged core muscles. Getting up off of seats and strengthening core muscles can prevent back injury and pain.

Two days of strength training per week with a focus on the core, back and hips can help build core strength. Individuals who don't know how to start safely should consult with a physical therapist or certified personal trainer.

### Alternative treatments

It may be easy to take a pill when pain begins, but people may want to explore alternative methods to alleviate pain. Changing ergonomics of work stations or how a person performs activities can help.

Techniques like mindfulness and cognitive behavioral therapy can reduce pain severity and improve quality of life. Massage therapy or even acupuncture are additional treatments to consider for back pain.

Back pain is a common complaint as one ages. But there are ways to overcome the pain and remain as active as possible.

# Is spinal compression stressing you out?



Adults between 40 and 60 years of age are losing an average of 1-2 inches in height. As this loss of height occurs, individuals lose fluid and size in the cartilage in their spine, known as the intervertebral disc. This process is known as degenerative disc disease and is associated with pain in the body. 30-40% of adults develop adult-onset scoliosis, where the spine begins to excessively curve laterally.

To counteract the symptoms of spine and nerve stress, it is common to take pain pills or even needle injections. However, these approaches often simply cover the problem. These approaches do not get to the root cause, and therefore, they allow the root cause to get worse over time.

Compression building up on the spine can come from chronic repetitive motions or overuse in mal aligned positions. Health implications regarding excess pain from the spine can result in cortisol imbalance which has an overall association with inflammation — related conditions are osteoporosis, depression, a weak immune system, and fatigue.

Pain creates stress signals in the nervous system and is related to higher levels of cortisol in the blood. Research has indicated that for every unit increase in pain severity, cortisol levels increased by approximately 9%. However, if the cortisol levels are elevated too long this may dysregulate that body's hormonal rhythms leading to low cortisol. Low cortisol has a negative impact on energy levels. Either way, too much pain, too often can throw the body out of balance.

Spinal alignment and spinal decompression have been shown to help improve these stresses and struggles. Palmer-specific spinal alignment is an approach that has been developed over the past 125 years that detects the health of specific spinal joints. Once the joints that are most affected in the spine are identified, the Palmer Doctor of Chiropractic can specifically align this joint allowing it to

work better and release the inflammation.

In addition, non-surgical spinal decompression is recommended to consistently and gently pull and decompress the spine so that the spinal disc can expand and circulate nutrients.

A combination of Palmer spinal alignment and non-surgical spinal decompression is safe and effective to maintain your height, align your spine, and reduce painful inflammation.

Spine and nerve health are becoming more understood as a gateway to whole body well-being because the nervous system inside your spinal column is the body's lifeline. We now know that excessive pressure on one's spine over time can create compression on spinal discs and spinal nerves that cause pain and fatigue. The value of stretching and strengthening your body

Exercise, in general, has shown some important benefits for individuals struggling with injuries, chronic pain, and other musculoskeletal problems. For instance, aerobic exercise enhances blood circulation and fluid drainage, which can help control swelling and feed more healing oxygen to the tissues.

Stretching and strengthening exercises promise some special benefits of their own. Stretches can release pent-up muscle tension and limber up the tissues to ease muscle spasms, making the everyday motion more comfortable, and reduce your injury risk. Strengthening also reduces injury risk by granting extra stability to the key muscle groups that maintain your posture, symmetry, and balance.



## Stretching exercises to keep your tissues flexible

*Common stretches that help to manage pain and improve flexibility include:*

- Forward, backward, and side neck tilts to loosen neck muscles
- Downward neck release exercises to free up the back of the neck
- Shoulder rolls to relax the tissues connecting your shoulders to your neck
- Cobra stretches, cat-cow stretches, spinal bridges, and seated spinal twists to improve mid-back flexibility
- Stretches that target the pelvic girdle, knees, wrists, tailbone, or lower back

## Strengthening exercises to support your musculoskeletal system

*Strengthening exercises typically target the muscle groups responsible for maintaining musculoskeletal alignment. Recommended strengthening routines can include:*

- Chin tucks, which strengthen the muscles that support your head
- The prone cobra, an exercise that targets the shoulders, neck, and upper back
- A standing exercise called the back burner works both the back and the chest
- Curl-ups, side bridges, and other exercises to build the core muscles that support your lower back

*Get to the root cause of your problem and check out Blue Mountain Chiropractic today and get evaluated to see if you are a candidate for spinal decompression.*

Patients seeking care at Blue Mountain Chiropractic Center with Drs. Michael and Tara Hogan are assured of receiving only the finest quality care through the use of multiple modern chiropractic techniques. Drs. Michael and Tara Hogan and the staff have a genuine concern for your well-being! Call Us Today (828) 246-9555

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My husband, myself and both my children see Dr. Mike and Dr. Tara, they both do amazing work. We appreciate them and highly recommend them from your Chiropractor needs! Autumn P.



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