

what's inside

- 7

Medical News

The Flu and You
- 10

Natural Options

Summer Slowdown
Self-care Routine
- 13

Integrative Medicine

A (New) Fan of
Fasting for Life
- 16

Fitness

GLP-1s: Strength Training
Is Not Optional
- 17

Through the Generations

Aging Solo: You Don't
Have to Go It Alone
- 19

Fresh Cuisine

Local Find: Málmal Café
Nourishing Eatery Welcomes All
- 22

Desert Events

Be a Part of Wellness
Day at The Shops!



It's hot. Time to step inside and hibernate. Or, is it time to step inside and rejuvenate?

Desert summers have always been a good time to reset. We cherish this space between busy seasons to slow down and honor body and mind. Our natural environment is asking us to do so.

Self-care is a necessity, and many travel from near and far to enjoy the world-class wellness our valley offers. Sometimes, however, these opportunities are out of reach for us locals.

Our *Desert Health* partners are here to help with summer offers designed to refresh, renew and encourage fun while living well! There are people behind each of these offers. They are locals too, and know what we need. We've included a few in this article.

Browse categories for inspiration: find your strength, rejuvenate inside and out, try something new, immerse in healing waters, escape and indulge and grow and evolve.

Let's do this! Let's emerge from summer's sweltering embrace as more vibrant, energized and enthusiastic versions of ourselves. We can do so with a little help from our friends.

Find Your Strength

Strong Republic Personal Training (see p.16)
You know the importance of maintaining muscle as we age. Get inspired with Strong Republic's 14-day Summer Jump Start. Locations in Palm Springs, Palm Desert and La Quinta. It's where you'll find me this July!

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Continued on page 21

Integrative Functional Lifestyle Medicine

How Do They Differ? | By Monica Price

Looking for an integrative primary care physician?



Meet Edith Jones-Poland, M.D.
Family and Integrative Care Physician

[Learn more on page 14](#)

Healthcare is changing. Across the globe, patients are becoming more proactive about their health and well-being, seeking approaches that do more than simply diagnose and treat disease. Increasingly, people want to understand the cause of illness rather than simply manage symptoms, what role their lifestyle may play in their health and how to prevent future disease.

Medicine is also evolving. With today's chronic disease epidemic, practitioners who are tired of treating symptoms, are now seeking ways to keep patients *well*. Many are returning to class to gain the knowledge, science, methodologies and qualifications to help patients remain healthy as they age.

As such, emerging models of whole-person care are becoming increasingly common, including integrative medicine, functional medicine and lifestyle medicine. Yet despite their growing popularity, these approaches are often misunderstood and frequently used interchangeably.

While all three share a common goal of improving health through a more holistic, patient-centered

approach, they are not the same. Understanding the differences can help patients make informed decisions about the type of care that best meets their needs.

A shift towards whole-person care

Traditional medicine has delivered remarkable advances in the treatment of acute illness, trauma, infectious diseases and surgical interventions. However, many of today's greatest health challenges are chronic conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity, chronic pain, digestive disorders, stress-related illness and mental health concerns.

These conditions are often influenced by multiple factors, including nutrition, physical activity, sleep, stress, environmental exposures, relationships and emotional well-being. As the evidence-based science grows to support the correlations, medicine is increasingly recognizing the value of whole-person approaches to care rather than focusing solely on treating individual symptoms.

This is where integrative, functional and lifestyle medicine come into play.

Continued on page 12



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REASONS TO THRIVE

Before you dive into anything new, it's a good idea to identify your 'why.' Our reasoning not only clarifies our purpose; it also helps keep us on track and alleviates burnout. It can be our most powerful motivator, especially when it comes to our health.

Living a truly healthy life takes practice and perseverance. It requires daily decisions that we know will serve us well in the future, whether that be tomorrow or in 20 years. And while healthy choices are extremely rewarding, they are not always the most fun in the moment.

You're looking at one of my biggest 'whys' below. Seven grandkids and then some. Getting to know their unique personalities fascinates me, and being woven into their lives—truly present and joyful in their world—is one of my greatest gifts.

On a recent trip to see our oldest graduate from high school (Bella in pink), I ran and played tag, rolled down hills and squeezed into a princess teepee for story time. That is the "Lolo" I want to be for many years to come. It's a great motivator to stay strong, energetic and young at heart.

What is your 'why?'

Our summer edition encourages you to do something good for yourself during these sweltering months: take an art class (p.4), start training (p.16), fast for a cellular reset (p.13), go ice skating (p.20), spoil yourself at a spa or attend an introspective workshop (p.21).

Instead of a thousand excuses why *not*, consider your 'why' and get motivated to explore. You never know how a new experience can impact your life, especially when it elevates mind and body and is driven by your 'why.'

Here's to Sunshine and Smiles ~

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EVERYTHING

*Photo by Lani Garfield

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Non-Invasive Option for Osteoarthritis

By Lauren Del Sarto

For people living with chronic knee or shoulder pain from osteoarthritis, Desert Regional Medical Center's Comprehensive Cancer Center (CCC) now offers a treatment that doesn't involve surgery, injections or daily medication: low-dose radiation therapy (LDRT).

The use of LDRT for arthritis dates back over 100 years. While it remained a common treatment in Europe, its use in the United States stalled in the 1980s as pharmaceuticals became more prominent.¹ Recent clinical trials have fueled a resurgence in thinking about its role in managing osteoarthritis, particularly in the early stages of disease.

Radiation is best known as a cancer-fighting tool, where high doses are used to destroy cancer cells. But at a much smaller dose, approximately 5% of that used to treat cancer, it can also work as a safe, non-surgical option for joint pain.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that more than 32.5 million adults in the U.S. live with the condition,² which gradually wears down the joints and typically brings pain, stiffness and swelling to the knees, hands, hips and back. There's currently no cure, but a recent placebo-controlled clinical trial showed that a single round of low-dose radiation could meaningfully ease symptoms for many patients.³

LDRT can be used for osteoarthritis of the knees, hips, hands, shoulders, ankles and elbows. Right now, the CCC offers this treatment for knees and shoulders, with hand treatments available soon.

"This is for patients with mild to moderate pain from osteoarthritis," says Amir Lavaf, MD, medical director for the clinical oncology research program at Desert Regional Medical Center. "Low-dose radiation can stop the inflammatory process that drives the disease, the same process that breaks down cartilage in the joint, which can lead to real reductions in pain."

Despite using the same equipment as cancer treatment, the radiation dose involved is far smaller. Patients receive just 50 cGy (a unit of radiation dose) every other day in a 15-minute session for a total of 6 treatments over two weeks. That works out to a total dose of 300 cGy, compared with the 3,000 to 6,000 cGy a typical cancer patient might receive over a full course of treatment. If pain returns in the future, the treatment can be safely repeated with no reported damage to the targeted region.



New options for joint pain management can enhance everyday life.

Continued on page 6



Coachella Valley's Health Care Industry

MENTORING THE FUTURE

Brought to you by OneFuture Coachella Valley



Mentoring the Future Through Compassion and Service

The future of healthcare leadership is built not only through textbooks and classroom instruction. It is built through compassion, mentorship, service and meaningful human connection.

At Coachella Valley High School (CVHS), the Health Academy students involved in HOSA-Future Health Professionals continue to demonstrate that leadership in healthcare begins long before entering a hospital or clinic.

For the second consecutive year, CVHS earned Gold recognition statewide at the HOSA California State Leadership Conference. The recognition reflects the Health Academy's ongoing commitment to preparing students for careers in healthcare, public health and community service. Beyond academic achievement, students are learning the importance of empathy, civic responsibility and supporting the well-being of others.

One recent example came during the latest LifeStream blood drive hosted at CVHS. Blood donation can create anxiety for many first-time student donors. To help provide comfort and emotional support during the event, Leslie Flores of La Quinta brought Jasper, a trained service pet from Animal Samaritans, to the campus.

Flores, a volunteer with both CVHS and Animal Samaritans, has seen firsthand the positive impact Jasper has on individuals experiencing stress or isolation. She regularly brings Jasper to visit her mother's memory care facility, where his calm presence consistently brightens residents' days and creates moments of joy and connection.

Recognizing the same potential benefit for students, Flores introduced Jasper to participants at the CVHS blood drive in May. The response was immediate. Smiles spread throughout the building as students, staff and donors interacted with Jasper before and after donating blood. For nervous donors, Jasper helped reduce stress and created a more relaxed and supportive environment.

Experiences like these highlight an important lesson for future healthcare professionals: healthcare extends beyond clinical skills alone. Compassion, emotional support, communication and community engagement remain essential components of patient care and public health.

Programs like HOSA and partnerships with organizations such as Animal Samaritans help expose students to these broader dimensions of healthcare service. Whether students ultimately become nurses, physicians, therapists, prehospital care providers or public health leaders, early exposure to compassionate service helps shape the kind of professionals and community members they become.

At CVHS, mentoring the future means teaching students not only how to succeed professionally, but also how to care for people with dignity, empathy and humanity—sometimes delivered with four furry legs.

Editorial by Simon Moore, CVHS Health Academy coordinator and HOSA advisor. He can be reached at simon.moore@cvusd.us.



CVHS Health Academy students work with Jasper to help induce calm.



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Creative Connection through Art

By Peggy Schulz

Summer in the Coachella Valley presents unique wellness challenges beyond high temperatures. As the frequency of outdoor activities declines, many full-time residents—particularly older adults, caregivers and individuals living alone—experience increased isolation due to fewer opportunities for meaningful social connection.

Public health organizations increasingly recognize social isolation and loneliness as significant health concerns. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, social isolation has been associated with higher risks of cognitive decline, depression, anxiety, heart disease and premature mortality.¹ Similarly, the World Health Organization has identified loneliness as an emerging global public health issue affecting both mental and physical well-being.²

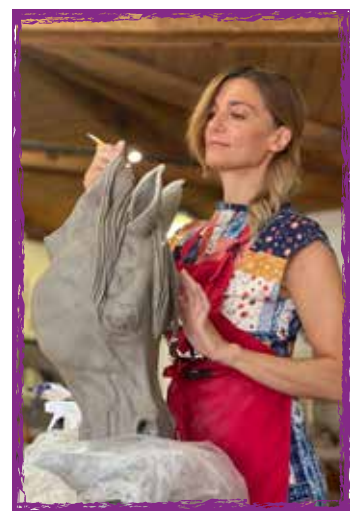


Art classes are an inspiring activity for both the experienced and inexperienced.

In response to these concerns, health care professionals and community organizations continue to explore accessible ways to support emotional wellness and social engagement. One approach receiving growing attention is participation in community-based arts programs.

Research suggests that creative activities promoting social engagement may provide measurable psychological and social benefits. A 2024 study published in *Public Health* found that continued participation in the arts among older adults helped reduce feelings of loneliness while improving social connection and emotional well-being.³ Another related study published in *Social Science & Medicine* reported that ongoing arts program engagement was associated with lower levels of social disconnection and loneliness among aging populations.⁴

Unlike many solitary activities, group art classes encourage conversation, collaboration and shared experiences in a relaxed and compassionate environment. While engaging in artistic exploration,



Advanced clay sculpture student at Old Town Artisan Studios

participants often develop friendships and support networks that extend well beyond the structured class activities. Researchers also note that artistic activities can promote presence, reduce stress, and improve self-esteem and cognitive stimulation.⁵

These benefits may be especially meaningful in our desert communities during the summer season. Indoor arts programming offers residents a cool, safe and inspiring space to remain socially active while participating in purposeful creative activities—

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Local nonprofit arts organizations throughout the Coachella Valley have long recognized the correlation between creativity, community engagement and emotional wellness. Old Town Artisan Studios in La Quinta offers specialized programming and cost-saving benefits for veterans, individuals living with Alzheimer's disease, and caregivers seeking supportive, social activities.

As conversations focused on preventive health and emotional wellness continue to gain popularity, community art classes may offer benefits far beyond mere recreation. Increasingly, they are being recognized as supportive wellness resources that can help build resilience, reduce isolation and strengthen overall well-being.

Peggy Schulz is the director of development at Old Town Artisan Studios in La Quinta. For more information on programs offered, visit www.oldtownartisanstudios.org.

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Alzheimer's group mixed-media classes are held weekly in Old Town La Quinta.

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Progress for Breast Cancer Cryoablation

First FDA approval, new clinical trial and FROST results

By Lauren Del Sarto

The current standard of care for early-stage breast cancers is lumpectomy. For decades, the question has not been whether more can be done, but whether the evidence supports doing less.

The six-year outcomes of the Freezing Instead of Resection of Small Tumors (FROST) trial, recently published in the *Annals of Surgical Oncology*, represent a meaningful step toward answering that question.

Freezing tumors, or cryoablation, is an FDA-approved procedure used for many types of cancers, including liver, kidney, prostate and lung. However, its use for breast cancer has been in clinical trials for the past two decades.¹

Each year, I publish the latest developments on cryoablation for breast cancer, as it was the procedure I chose in 2019, at the age of 54, for my early-stage invasive ductal carcinoma. I remain cancer-free today and am an advocate for this less invasive procedure as an accepted “standard of care” for all breast cancers.

First FDA approval

On October 3, 2025, the FDA approved the ProSense (IceCure) cryoprobe for cryoablation treatment of early-stage breast cancer based on the favorable results of the ICE3 Trial, a second clinical trial that established the safety and effectiveness of cryoablation in the management of early-stage invasive breast cancer.² This landmark FDA approval applies specifically to women 70 years of age or older with low-risk, estrogen-sensitive and HER2-negative invasive ductal carcinoma, and a tumor size equal to or less than 1.5 cm.³

While this approval is limited, it opens the door to future progress, says leading advocate and FROST study investigator Dennis R. Holmes, MD, FACS. “This approval represents an important first step toward expanding access to breast cancer cryoablation nationwide.” He adds that insurance coverage is not yet guaranteed and that establishing reimbursement pathways, such as dedicated billing codes, will be essential to achieving widespread coverage.

Follow-up study seeking participants

As a condition of FDA approval, IceCure will conduct a multicenter post-market study involving approximately 400 patients to further evaluate the safety and effectiveness of breast cancer cryoablation. The study, known as the CholCE Trial, is expected to open in Southern California this month (July) and will continue enrollment and follow-up over the next 2-3 years.

The cost of the cryoablation procedure will be billed to insurance when coverage is available. For eligible patients whose insurance does not cover the procedure, treatment may be provided at no cost through the study.

Holmes, a breast cancer surgeon and cryoablation researcher with more than 20 years of experience in breast cryoablation, will serve as a participating investigator in the CholCE Trial.

Participant inclusion criteria include:

- 70 years of age or older
- Diagnosis of invasive ductal breast carcinoma by core needle biopsy, meeting the following criteria:
 - A single site of disease
 - Tumor size equal to or smaller than 1.5 cm in greatest diameter as measured by breast ultrasound
 - Estrogen receptor positive (ER+), progesterone receptor positive (PR+) and HER2 negative (HER2-)
 - Low-risk tumor biology
 - No evidence of lymph node involvement

All study participants will be required to receive endocrine (anti-estrogen) therapy as part of the treatment protocol. Sentinel lymph node biopsy and radiation therapy will be optional and may be performed at the discretion of the patient and treating physicians.

Participants will be followed closely after treatment, with follow-up visits every six months during the first year and annually thereafter for a total follow-up period of five years. Follow-up evaluations will include physical examination and breast imaging to monitor treatment outcomes and detect any evidence of recurrence.

If you feel you meet these criteria and are interested in participating in the trial, reach out to Dr. Holmes’ office at Sam and Grace Carvajal Comprehensive Breast Cancer, Adventist Health Glendale, 1-800-508-CRYO (2796).

FROST trial results published

The FROST trial represented a minimally invasive alternative for early-stage breast cancers. On January 15, 2026, outcomes for the six-year clinical trial were published in the *Annals of Surgical Oncology*.³ The prospective study evaluated the effectiveness and safety of cryoablation for stage I breast cancer in women 50 years and older with estrogen-sensitive, HER2-negative invasive ductal carcinoma. All participants received anti-estrogen therapy; radiation therapy was recommended only for women younger than 70 years; and lymph node surgery was optional for all patients.

Holmes, the principal investigator of this national, multicenter clinical trial, summarizes the key study findings as such:⁴

- 5-year local recurrence rate: 3.6%
 - Demonstrating cryoablation is as effective as lumpectomy in similar women
- 5-year local recurrence rate in women 70 and older: 2.1%
- 97.5% of participants safely avoided lymph node surgery.
- Side effects were mild for both cryoablation and radiation therapy.
- No breast cancer-related deaths and no distant recurrences were observed.
- Anti-estrogen therapy remains essential after cryoablation for reducing the risk of recurrence in the breast, lymph nodes, and beyond, just as it is following lumpectomy.
- Radiation therapy benefits women under 70, reducing recurrence risk similarly to its role after lumpectomy.

As stated, the trial demonstrated that cryoablation is as effective as lumpectomy in women with similar tumor characteristics. These findings are significant and contribute

Continued on page 6



Cryoablation, which freezes tumors, is evolving from a fringe alternative to a viable treatment for certain breast cancers.



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Breaking Emotional Patterns with EMDR

By Carolina Vasquez, LMFT

Imagine you're in a meeting at work. A colleague interrupts you, dismisses your idea or makes a cutting remark in front of the group. You may feel embarrassed, hurt or even enraged, yet your mind goes blank. Hours later, you're still wondering, *Why didn't I say something?*

Most of us focus on this reaction and assume something is wrong with us. What we do not always realize is that our reactions may have much deeper roots.

Research in neuroscience has shown that a part of the brain called the amygdala helps store emotional memories and that severe stress can keep those memories emotionally charged long after the original experience has passed. These emotionally charged memories can give rise to what I like to call "recycled emotions." When something in the present reminds the brain of that earlier experience, the brain and body can react as though there is danger, even without us realizing it.

To our brains, danger can be physical, emotional, relational, financial, social or even something as simple as saving face. These reminders, or "triggers," can bring up old feelings, like they did in that meeting. This is what we refer to as a trauma response.

Many people associate the word "trauma" with abuse, war or major tragedies. But trauma responses can also develop from emotional neglect, housing instability, high-conflict homes, chronic criticism, bullying or ongoing financial hardship.

When these experiences happen repeatedly or during important stages of development, they can shape the beliefs we carry and the patterns we repeat. This may look like shutting down during conflict, avoiding speaking up, expecting rejection, or staying on high alert, to name a few. These knee-jerk reactions can leave us feeling

stuck because they often happen automatically, even against our best efforts. In other words, knowing better does not always mean feeling or doing better.

This is where eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) may help. EMDR is an evidence-based psychotherapy that helps the brain process memories that may still feel emotionally "stuck," allowing room for healthier responses in the present.

The therapy uses bilateral stimulation, such as eye movements, tapping or alternating tones, within a structured approach that targets specific memories and beliefs. It is one of the most researched trauma therapies with more than 30 randomized controlled trials demonstrating its effectiveness in adults and children.²

Although researchers are still studying exactly how EMDR works, one leading theory suggests that recalling a difficult memory while engaging in bilateral stimulation may help reduce the memory's emotional intensity over time.² As those memories become less emotionally charged, the repeated patterns they once supported can begin to change.

That is when the shifts begin to happen outside of therapy. People who spent years avoiding difficult conversations begin having them. Those who convinced themselves that a dream is out of reach start pursuing it. Situations that once felt overwhelming become manageable. We begin to respond to the present rather than react to the past.

EMDR is not a quick fix, and it is not the right fit for every person. But if you have noticed repeated patterns in your life that you cannot seem to change, no matter how hard you try, EMDR may be worth exploring. It is not the only path to healing, but for many people, it becomes the one that finally opens the door.

Carolina Vasquez is the founder and executive director of Desert Insight, a Coachella Valley group therapy practice. Visit www.desertinsight.com. (License #120906). References available upon request.

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Non-Invasive Option for Osteoarthritis

Who is this treatment for?

According to Dr. Lavaf, LDRT works best for patients who are 60 or older, who have exhausted other options, like medication, physical therapy and joint injections, and who aren't currently candidates for surgery.

The CCC reports that patients undergoing this treatment have reported significant improvement, with pain levels commonly dropping from 7 down to 4 on a 10-point scale.

"This therapy is meant to work as an anti-inflammatory, not a cure," Lavaf notes.

What is the cost?

Good news: this treatment is covered by Medicare and most major insurance plans. The CCC handles securing prior authorization before treatment begins, so patients don't have to navigate that process alone. It's also worth noting that undergoing this therapy doesn't rule out joint replacement later if a patient ultimately qualifies and opts for surgery.

Those suffering from shoulder and or knee osteoarthritis and curious about whether LDRT could help are encouraged to schedule a consultation. During the consultation, the CCC care team will review treatment history and any existing imaging or X-rays, so patients are encouraged to bring them to the initial appointment.

Lauren Del Sarto is the founder/publisher of Desert Health. To learn more, visit www.desertcarenetwork.com/services/oncology.

Continued from page 3

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Progress for Breast Cancer Cryoablation

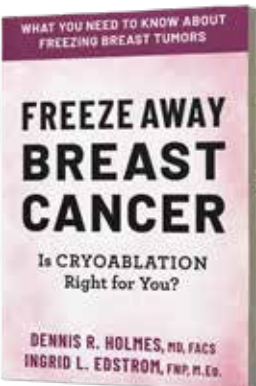
to the growing consensus that surgical de-escalation—when matched to appropriate tumor biology and patient profile—does not compromise outcomes.

"Special thanks to the pioneering women who participated in this study and made this research possible," says Holmes.

With these advances, cryoablation for breast cancer is finally evolving from a fringe alternative to an increasingly legitimate option. Holmes, who offers cryoablation outside of trials for those who do not qualify, has written a book that launches this fall with pre-orders available at www.globepequot.com. His goal is to help patients understand the treatment and whether cryoablation is right for them.

Lauren Del Sarto is founder/publisher of Desert Health. For more information on cryoablation for breast cancer, visit Dr. Holmes website at www.cryoablation.com. For more information on Lauren's cancer journey, search 'cryoablation' at www.deserthealthnews.com.

Continued from page 5



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The Flu and You

By Judi Shor, PharmD, CMC, ACP

Before you know it, fall will be here and with it, the inevitable start of flu season. But year-round, teams are collecting and studying influenza samples in over 129 countries around the globe. The most dangerous and contagious viral strains are then identified and incorporated into the United States flu vaccine formulation to help recipients stay one step ahead of a severe flu season.

Australia’s current winter season, which aligns with our summer, often provides an early glimpse into the strains expected to circulate in the U.S. This year, data from Down Under has been concerning, with a highly contagious flu mutation known as ‘Super-K’ contributing to a massive surge in Australian transmission and hospitalizations. The good news is that, although flu viruses continue to mutate and evolve, the current Super-K variant has been proactively included in the 2026-27 U.S. vaccine formulations.

As the American Lung Association states, “Vaccination is the best way to prevent flu and its potentially serious complications for almost everyone.” Older adults overwhelmingly fall into those most at risk of flu complications, particularly if unvaccinated. Nearly 85% of flu-related deaths and up to 70% of hospitalizations occur in the over-65 unvaccinated population. While it is still possible to contract the flu after vaccination, studies consistently show that vaccination reduces the risk of severe outcomes such as pneumonia, organ failure, hospitalization and death.

I am often asked if the flu vaccine can cause the flu. It takes about two weeks for full post-vaccination immunity to set in, so it is possible to catch the flu during that waiting period or to contract another significant respiratory virus, such as COVID-19 or RSV, which will be covered in future editions.

Influenza injections are composed of inactivated viruses, meaning they are biologically incapable of causing infection. Mild post-vaccination symptoms, such as fatigue or soreness, are actually positive signs that the immune system is mounting a protective response. Regardless of whether they were vaccinated or not, seniors experiencing flu symptoms or exposure to one or more infected contacts, such as during a nursing home outbreak, may immediately contact their healthcare provider for consideration of additional antiviral therapy to shorten the course and reduce symptoms and spread.

Antiviral agents, however, have limited efficacy and potential side effects, and are not a substitute for timely vaccination. (Important tip: For maximum benefit during an active flu case, antivirals are best prescribed during the first 48 hours of symptom onset.)

Although immunization start dates are subject to change, current flu season guidance for adults age 65 and older advises vaccination in September or October with one of the following preservative-free, FDA-approved options:

Fluzone High-Dose®: The high-dose [HD] formulation is four times stronger than the standard-dose flu shot. Clinical studies have shown that HD elicits a stronger antibody response in older adults, with a reduction in flu-related hospitalizations and deaths.

FLUAD®: This contains an adjuvant or booster ingredient that enhances the body’s immune response. It was specifically developed for older adults whose immune response may be weakened due to age, medications or underlying disease.

FLUBLOK®: Created in the laboratory, this recombinant (i.e., genetically multi-sourced formula) bypasses the need for egg or virus cell cultivation. This technology has generated an alternative for individuals seeking an egg-free vaccine.

Fluzone HD and Fluad are both egg-based vaccines. However, updated instructions on egg allergies state that the amount of purified egg protein in each vaccine is inconsequential and no longer requires special precautions. The exception being that individuals who previously experienced a severe allergic reaction to an egg-based influenza vaccine would continue to opt for egg-free alternatives.

At present, the above three vaccines are all equally recommended for seniors. Side effects are generally mild and subside within 72 hours. Refer to the FDA website for updates and detailed information on each vaccine: www.fda.gov/vaccines-blood-biologics/vaccines. As always, consult with your healthcare provider regarding vaccine-related concerns and guidance.

Dr. Shor is a board-certified senior care manager with advanced expertise in geriatric medication therapy. She operates a senior care management practice in the Coachella Valley and can be reached at (760) 271.2284 or www.shorcaresuccessfulaging.com.

Sources: 1) <https://www.fda.gov/flu/>; 2) www.hhs.gov/immunization/diseases/flu/index.html#3; 3) <https://www.lung.org/lung-health-diseases/wellness/vaccines>



September and October are the currently recommended months for flu shots.



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If My Spirit Animal Were a Cat

By Amy Austin, PSYD, LMFT

If truth be told, when my cat Mazel showed up five years ago, just after the loss of my beloved dog Havi, I was pondering rescuing a dog. In hindsight, I've become acutely aware that God must get a good laugh while we are busy making plans.

I've never really given much thought to aligning with an animal's spirit, one that possesses the qualities and attributes of who I am or aspire to be. If I did, I might imagine that animal to be a doggedly devoted dog or a horse, strong and sturdy when confronted by "neigh" sayers. Other choices might be a sloth, committed with each step of "slowbriety," or for sure a monkey, playful and spontaneous. Possibly a lion, keeping its pride in check, or a dolphin, taking a risk to leap out of its element without fear. Maybe an elephant who never forgets but can learn to forgive. Or, a bee who can "behive" appropriately when in a sticky situation.

But as I gaze at dozing Mazel, who admittedly was an acquired taste, I am reminded that I have been selectively invited into a cat's world. Accepting that invitation, I've been able to recognize some "purrfectly" imperfect parts of me, and would like to share a few pearls of wisdom I have learned from life with a cat.



Mazel found his human in Dr. Amy.

- ✂ Mazel has taught me about boundaries. One doesn't approach a cat and automatically pet them. As with humans, cats have their own definition of what 'safe space' looks like and it's up to us to honor it. Keep poking a bear (I mean cat) and it could end up a wounding experience.
- 🐾 Have you ever witnessed a relaxed cat, eyes closed with its head propped up? When thoughts race like a cascading waterfall through the human brain, observing a cat in chill mode can reduce overthinking to a trickle. It only takes a few minutes each day to oxygenate the brain by breathing deeply, inhaling relaxation and exhaling tension. Anything catastrophic can wait.
- 🐾 I'm learning that when life is hard, it's ok to reach for a helping hand, as exemplified by Mazel when we met. He showed up on my doorstep wounded and starving, but mustering as much dignity in the moment as he could. Pain, sadness and hurt can coexist with dignity and integrity. Rather than reacting impulsively, conserve your energy and allow time to heal wounds.
- 🐾 Playtime with Mazel allows me to engage and interact with the lighter side of myself. I "hissterically" watch Mazel with unrelenting zoomies run and stop and return to normal on a dime. I'm sure he gets the last laugh when he jumps out of nowhere and gives me a good scare.
- 🐾 Even when hills feel like mountains and life feels like an uphill climb, Mazel has taught me to land on both feet with a fearless desire to ascend to new heights.

It's pretty evident that Mazel chose his home and human, but the truest gift I've received is how to embrace the unexpected with interest and curiosity, which I've learned is very much the true nature of a feline.

Dr. Amy Austin is a licensed marriage and family therapist (MFC#41252) and doctor of clinical psychology in Rancho Mirage. She can be reached at (760) 774.0047.

Tangerine Peel (Chen Pi) in TCM

By Diane Sheppard, PhD, LAc

Tangerine peel, known in Traditional Chinese Medicine as Chen Pi, is one of the most revered herbs in the Chinese pharmacopeia. It has been documented since the Han Dynasty (2nd century BCE) in the *Shen Nong Bencao Jing*, the foundational encyclopedia of Chinese herbalism, and still used today.

The name tells the story: Chen means "aged" and Pi means "peel." The skin is aged a minimum of three years and can be stored up to 60 years, treasured much like a fine French wine. Older peels fetch high prices at auction, as the deeper the dis-ease, the older the peel.

Fresh peel starts bright orange with a vivid, spiced citrus scent. Over time, it fades to pale orange, then deepens into rich brown. Chinese folklore says that holding an aged peel to the light reveals oil cells that resemble "scattered stars across the sky." The most prized Chen Pi comes from Xinhui in Guangdong Province, home to a dedicated museum where visitors can learn about the herb and buy aged peels.



Dried tangerine peels are one of the most revered herbs in Chinese pharmacopeia.

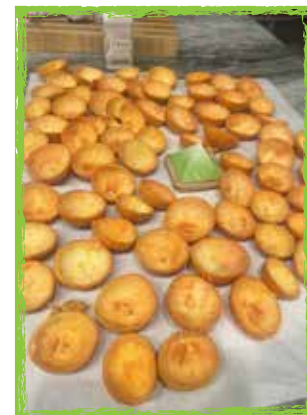
Medicinal benefits. Brewed as a tea, Chen Pi delivers a warming, subtly sweet citrus flavor with gentle medicinal depth. As a Qi-regulating herb, it supports the spleen and stomach, easing indigestion, bloating, belching, nausea, poor appetite and acid reflux – especially after rich meals. It also enters the lung channel to clear cough caused by phlegm that rises from the digestive system. It is not intended for daily long-term use and should be avoided during dry cough.

How to make your own. To make your own Chen Pi, eat or juice the tangerines, scrape out the white pith with a spoon and let them dry out on the counter. After a couple of days, I place them in the sun for a few more days, preferring this to a dehydrator or oven, especially in the summer.

Place them in a brown bag for a day or two, then return the peels to the sun for one final day. Store them in glass jars or ceramic containers in a cool, dark cupboard and bring them into the sun every few months. You can use them right away in tea, coffee, soups or baked goods, or let time deepen them for greater medicinal potency.

Diane Sheppard is a licensed acupuncturist and doctor of Traditional Chinese Medicine with AcQPoint Wellness Center. She can be reached at (760) 345.2200. For more information, visit www.acqpoint.com.

Sources: 1) John K. Chen and Tina T. Chen, *Chinese Medical Herbology and Pharmacology* (City of Industry, CA: Art of Medicine Press, 2004); 2) Henry C. Lu, *Chinese Natural Cures* (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 1994); 3) <https://baike.baidu.com/en/item/Chenpi%20Village/57848>



Tangerine peels drying on Dr. Sheppard's kitchen counter

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Inflammaging: Is It a Thing, and Should We Care?

By Brook Dougherty

Trust the beauty industry to coin another term designed to make desert dwellers tremble. Inflammaging. That glorious intersection of aging and inflammation.

Yes, it's real and well-documented.¹ But no, it's not a new disaster. It's just a name for something skin does as it ages. And it's not a women-only club; men's skin ages this way too, just without the hormonal cliff of menopause.

The term was coined in 2000 by an immunologist studying older immune systems.¹ The basic idea: as we age, the immune system gets less precise and more trigger-happy, sending a low-level stream of inflammatory signals even when nothing is wrong.

It nudges along the enzymes that break down collagen and elastin, interferes with overnight repair and wears at the barrier—the outer layer that holds moisture in and keeps irritants out. None of this announces itself with a rash. It's quieter, which is why it can feel like it came out of nowhere.

If you've ever wondered when your skin got thinner, or why a product that worked for years suddenly stopped, this may be the answer.

Women face a sharp estrogen decline, and estrogen isn't just a reproductive hormone. In skin, it helps regulate collagen production, barrier strength and inflammatory response. Women can lose roughly 30% of their skin collagen in the first five years after menopause, alongside a thinner barrier and less oil production.

Men get a version of this too; testosterone decline affects skin thickness and oil production, but more gradually, over decades rather than a sharp five-year window.

If you live in the desert, you already have two of the biggest inflammaging amplifiers built into daily life: relentless UV and bone-dry air. UV generates free radicals that feed directly into that inflammatory loop. Low humidity stresses the barrier around the clock. Heat adds to the irritation.

Should we care? A little, and not in the way the marketing wants you to. No need to panic or treat your face like a battlefield. But a few things are worth knowing:

Barrier first. If the barrier is compromised, everything else works harder. Lipids, ceramides and niacinamide are the workhorses here; when the air is drier, use more cream, more mists, more balm.

Antioxidants earn their keep. Vitamin C and antioxidant-rich botanicals intercept free-radical noise before it becomes inflammation.

Strong actives, gentler entry. Retinoids, peptides and acids genuinely support collagen, but layering them onto a strained barrier produces more redness than results. Back off during summer.

Sun protection isn't optional. Of all the facts, this one has the most evidence behind it. SPF, shade and a hat do more for inflammaging than any jar on the shelf—and painting indoors beats tennis at noon.

Brook Dougherty of Indio is the co-founder and chief alchemist of JustUs Skincare, formulated for mature and post-menopausal skin. She can be reached at (310) 266.7171 or brook@justusskincare.com. www.justusskincare.com.



Hats are one of the best solutions to minimizing inflammaging.

Reference: 1) Franceschi C, Bonafè M, Valensin S, et al. (2000). "Inflamm-aging: An evolutionary perspective on immunosenescence." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 908, 244–254.

Summer Slowdown Self-care Routine

Supporting the vagus nerve and re-regulating stress

By Cristal Salcido Najar, ND, APCC

Summer promises relaxation, but many people continue to feel busy, overstimulated and stressed. This makes it the perfect time to embrace a "summer slowdown" and nurture one of the body's most powerful pathways for recovery and resilience: the vagus nerve.

The vagus nerve is the longest cranial nerve and serves as a major communication pathway between the brain and body. It plays a central role in the parasympathetic nervous system, also known as the "rest-and-digest" system.¹ Healthy vagal tone helps the body recover from stress, regulate inflammation, support digestion and maintain emotional balance.

Chronic stress, however, can impair vagal function, contributing to anxiety, digestive complaints, poor sleep and fatigue.^{2,3} Fortunately, vagal tone can often be strengthened through simple daily practices.

One of the most effective tools is slow, diaphragmatic breathing. Research shows that slow breathing activates the vagus nerve and improves heart rate variability (HRV), a marker of nervous system flexibility and resilience.⁴ A simple technique is 4:6 breathing, where you inhale through your nose for 4 seconds and exhale for 6 seconds. As you breathe in, focus on expanding the belly (as if filling a balloon in your abdomen) to fully engage the diaphragm. This sends calming signals through the vagus nerve and helps shift the body into a more relaxed state. Studies suggest that practicing slow-paced breathing for 10-20 minutes daily can significantly improve HRV and increase resilience to stress.^{5,6}

A summer vagus nerve routine does not need to be complicated. Start the morning with 5-10 minutes of sunlight exposure and a few rounds of belly breathing. Throughout the day, take breaks to stretch, spend time in nature or go for a walk. Listening to music, humming along to a favorite song and sharing meals with family and friends are additional ways to signal safety to the brain and support recovery from stress. Humming is particularly interesting because vibrations in the vocal cords and throat may stimulate vagal pathways and promote relaxation.⁷

Other supportive practices include meditation, yoga, chanting, cold-water exposure and meaningful social connection.

Summer offers a natural invitation to slow down. By incorporating mindful breathing, time in nature, social connection and intentional rest, we can help retrain the nervous system to move from survival mode towards a state of balance, recovery and resilience.

Dr. Najar is a primary care naturopathic doctor and an associate professional clinical counselor at Live Well Clinic and can be reached at (760) 771.5970 or www.livewellclinic.org. References available upon request.



Summer is the perfect time to slow down and take a breath.



The Pause Before the Pivot

The strength of stillness

By Christy Curtis

What's the scariest thing you've ever done? For me, it wasn't changing careers. It wasn't starting over in my mid-40s. It wasn't letting go of a life I thought would unfold differently. It was choosing to pivot. Because pivoting asks us to do something that feels completely counterintuitive. It asks us to pause when everything inside us wants to panic.

Perhaps you've been there. Maybe you're teetering on the decision of retirement. Maybe you're navigating a divorce, an empty nest, caregiving, burnout, a health challenge or a growing sense that the life you've built no longer fits the person you're becoming. Life rarely unfolds exactly as planned. And at some point, nearly all of us find ourselves asking the same question: *What now?*

Our human instinct is often to move faster. We search for answers, make plans, seek advice and try to figure out the quickest route forward. The brain craves certainty. It wants to close the loop, reduce discomfort and convince us we're making the "right" decision.

But after years as a wellness educator, mindfulness specialist, well-being coach and former athlete, I've learned something important: Meaningful change rarely begins with action. It begins with awareness.

As a basketball player, I learned the importance of a two-foot jump stop. Before changing direction, you don't keep running at full speed. You land. Both feet grounded. Stable. Aware. Only then can you pivot. Forward. Backward. In a completely new direction. But always from a place of control rather than chaos. Life works much the same way. When we rush through transitions, we often make decisions from fear, urgency or uncertainty. When we pause, we create space to listen. That realization inspired a framework I now teach called P.I.V.O.T.

Pause. Before reacting, spiraling or making the next move, pause. This is where the nervous system begins to regulate. A pause creates space between what is happening and how we choose to respond.

Insight. Turn inward to your body wisdom. Long before the mind catches up, the body often knows. A tight chest. Shallow breathing. Restless sleep. A persistent feeling that something is off. These are not inconveniences. They are messengers.

Versus. Notice the tension between what you genuinely feel and what you think you should do. Many of us spend years living by expectations—our own or someone else's. Yet transitions invite a deeper question: What feels true for me now? Not five years ago. Not according to someone else's timeline. Now.

Overthinking. This is where many of us get stuck and in our own way. Overthinking pulls us out of the present moment and into imagined futures filled with worry, doubt and endless possibilities. We analyze. Replay. Second-guess. In doing so, we disconnect from the very wisdom we're searching for.

Thinking. Grounded thinking is different. It doesn't come from fear. It comes from clarity and emerges when we've slowed down long enough to reconnect with ourselves. From that place, decisions feel steadier, more intentional and more aligned with who we are becoming.

Continued on page 17

Living Wellness

with Jennifer Di Francesco

Skimming the Surface of Life



An age-old activity is the simple act of casting a flat pebble over a body of water, watching it bounce and skip across the surface. This skimming effect is performed, often without thinking, to ease anxiety—a small ritual of release.

Nowadays, “skimming the surface” describes something far more common; the way we move through everyday life. We stay on the surface of our experiences, gliding from one moment to the next. Sadly, this tendency does not ease anxiety the way the childhood pastime does.

We have the opportunity to inhabit a life with our fullest presence, yet too often, we don't take it. Skimming should be left for stone skipping. When we go deeper than the surface of life, we move from gliding on top of things to an existence of mattering and meaning.

Most things in our current society lure us toward a smooth, easy, fast ride. Today's life motto seems to be: fit as much as possible into the schedule. Make it all look perfect. Find a way to expedite and extract information with as little effort as possible. Somehow, these practices leave us empty.

The opposite creates a satiated life. Less is more. Expose your frailties and vulnerabilities. Dig deeper and extract meaning through examination and reflection. When we slow down and cultivate attention, the pebbles of our life drop deeper, and the experiences become richer. The following strategies are helpful practices:

Do hard things voluntarily. A challenging hike, an outing in rain or imperfect weather, a conversation you've been avoiding. These steps require us to dig deeper, yet the outcome becomes memorable and character-building.

Dine in a phone-free zone. Studies show that merely having a cell phone on the dinner table lessens the depth of conversation.' The phone doesn't even need to be picked up. Our brains register its presence and keep the conversation lighter. Try dining without your phone even visible. Savor the flavors and texture of your food, and the deeper conversation that follows.

Get real with each other. Spend real, unstructured time with people you love, not just enjoying parallel activities.

Most of these steps revolve around connection and igniting a human spark. We crave personal interaction. Current cultures and norms convince us we can find this through technology and self-reliance, but authentic relationships invite us to rise to a deeper level of engagement.

Live with deep, intentional presence, and know that all the pebbles of our lives must drop and rest in a little murky water to marinate in richness and bounty.

Jennifer Di Francesco is a wellness explorer and desert adventurer and can be reached at www.coachellabellaboho.com.



Studies show that even a phone turned-off on the dinner table is distracting.

Reference: 1) <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0022103117301737#>

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A greater sense of ease in the body
Improved relaxation and circulation
A feeling of alignment and renewal

Physio-Magnetic Transduction

- Promotes relaxation and overall comfort
- Supports mobility and body awareness
- Encourages natural recovery processes

Spinal Flow

- Helps release built-up tension
- Supports nervous system balance and mind-body connection
- Encourages a sense of alignment and ease

Purification Wrap

- Supports relaxation and lymphatic flow
- Encourages a refreshed, lighter feeling
- Promotes full-body renewal

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- One IV session per week





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Integrative, Functional and Lifestyle Medicine

Continued from page 1

What is integrative medicine?

Integrative medicine combines conventional medical care with complementary therapies and practices that may support health and well-being. Rather than viewing conventional and complementary approaches as opposing philosophies, integrative medicine brings them together in a coordinated and evidence-informed way.



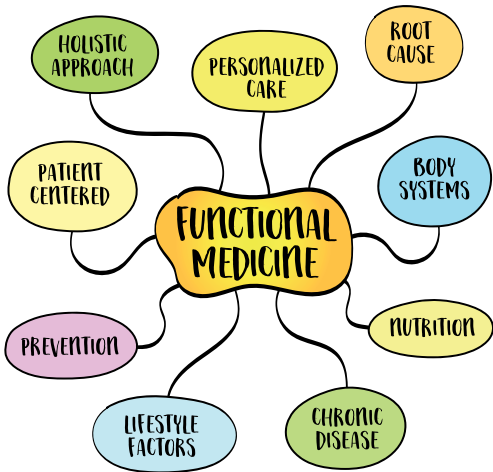
Treatments may include standard medical interventions such as prescription medications, diagnostic testing and surgery, alongside therapies such as acupuncture, nutrition counseling, massage, mindfulness practices, herbal medicine, homeopathy, yoga and psychological support.

At its heart, integrative medicine asks, "What combination of therapies will best support this patient?" The emphasis is on supporting healing, prevention, resilience and overall well-being through personalized care plans that address physical, emotional, mental and social aspects of health.

What is functional medicine?

Functional medicine takes a slightly different approach.

Often described as a "root-cause" model of healthcare, functional medicine seeks to identify and address the underlying factors that may contribute to illness rather than focusing primarily on disease diagnosis.



Functional medicine practitioners examine how different body systems interact and how genetics, environment, nutrition, hormones, gut health, immune function, stress and lifestyle factors may influence a person's health.

For example, two patients diagnosed with migraines may receive very different treatment plans because the underlying triggers may differ significantly. One person's symptoms may be linked to hormonal changes, while another's may be associated with food sensitivities, sleep disruption, chronic stress or nutrient deficiencies.

Functional medicine, therefore, tends to involve detailed patient histories, extensive health assessments and highly personalized interventions. Treatment plans may include advanced lab testing, dietary and lifestyle changes and supplementation.

What is lifestyle medicine?

Lifestyle medicine is perhaps the most straightforward of the three approaches, focusing on preventing, treating and often reversing chronic disease through sustainable lifestyle changes.

Research consistently demonstrates that lifestyle factors are among the leading contributors to many chronic illnesses. Lifestyle medicine seeks to empower individuals to make meaningful changes that can reduce disease risk and improve quality of life. The six pillars of lifestyle medicine are:

- Healthy nutrition
- Regular physical activity
- Quality sleep
- Stress management
- Avoidance of harmful substances
- Positive social connections

Unlike integrative medicine, lifestyle medicine does not necessarily incorporate complementary therapies. Likewise, it may not involve the extensive investigative processes often associated with functional medicine.

Instead, the focus is on helping individuals adopt and maintain healthier behaviors that can significantly improve health outcomes.

Why are they often confused?

One reason these terms are frequently used interchangeably is that they share many similarities. All three approaches:

- Focus on the individual rather than just the diagnosis or symptoms
- Recognize the importance of nutrition, exercise, sleep and stress management
- Encourage active patient participation
- Aim to improve long-term health outcomes
- Emphasize prevention as well as treatment

The other benefit is that all three approaches enhance the patient-practitioner relationship. Your doctor becomes a partner in keeping you well. And because many practitioners draw on elements from all three, the boundaries between these approaches can sometimes appear blurred.

Integrative, functional and lifestyle medicine each offer valuable perspectives on how healthcare can become more personalized, preventative and patient-centered. While their methods and priorities differ, they all represent a broader shift towards understanding health as a dynamic state of balance rather than simply the absence of disease.

Monica Price is a nutritional therapist and a European health expert. She is a television and radio presenter for numerous media outlets and host of "The Monica Price Show." Monica invites your questions and can be reached at monica@monica-price.co.uk. www.monica-price.co.uk.

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A (New) Fan of Fasting for Life

By Lauren Del Sarto

I have always wanted to try a fast as the ultimate reset. But I just couldn't swallow the thought of living on water alone. I love food and am no fun when hangry. Recently, I was introduced to the Fasting Mimicking Diet.

At a conference earlier this year, the conversation turned to night sweats, a menopausal misery I have suffered from way too long. Presenter Melanie Murphy Richter, MS, RDN, asked if I had ever tried a fast. With a master's in nutrition, healthspan and longevity, Richter serves as the medical science educator and director of communications for Prolon, a line of scientifically designed organic foods that activate fasting benefits. She recommended I review the science and offered to send me one of their 5-day programs to try.

Backed by science. Driven by dry-night desire, I dove in and learned that calorie-restricted diets have been studied in the field of aging for over 100 years.¹ In 1935, Clive McCay, PhD, discovered that restricting caloric intake in young mice could increase their lifespan by 50%.² Roy Walford, MD, expanded on that science in the '70s, prolonging the lifespan of middle-aged mice by 10-20%.¹

Modern longevity expert Valter Longo, PhD, author of *The Longevity Diet* and *Fasting Cancer*, studied with Dr. Walford before creating a nutritional program that mimics fasting, which he dubbed the Fasting Mimicking Diet, or FMD. As director of the Longevity Institute at USC, Dr. Longo partnered with the university in 2009 to form L-Nutra, Prolon's parent company. His program has been validated through 25 years of research and more than 47 clinical trials by 18 leading institutions, including Stanford, Yale, Mayo Clinic and the University of Genoa. Longo donates his proceeds from both his work with the company and books to longevity research through his non-profit Create Cures Foundation. In 2018, *TIME* named him one of the 50 most influential people in healthcare.

How the FMD works. When we eat, nutrient-sensing pathways signal to the body that it has been fed, and all is well. Through a precise combination of caloric content and macronutrient ratios, Prolon's FMD is engineered to stay below the threshold that triggers those pathways. The body never receives a clear "fed" signal and therefore thinks it is fasting, even while food is being consumed. It achieves this by restricting protein and carbs while providing plant-based foods: healthy fats, soups, olives, crackers, nutrient bars and herbal teas that allow the body to burn fat while protecting lean muscle. Portions are packaged in five daily boxes with approximately 1,100 calories on day one and 750 on days 2-5.

The ultimate prize: autophagy. People fast for many reasons—weight loss, disease prevention, metabolism—but the most beneficial outcome is autophagy (ah-TAH-fa-gee). This is the cells' cleanup system, clearing out damaged material to make way for repair and renewal, so cells can operate as more efficient, younger versions of themselves. Autophagy launches after roughly 72 hours of nutrient deprivation. L-Nutra's research shows that three, five-day sessions over three months is associated with a 2.5-year reduction in biological age. A simulation of this data forecasts a potential biological age reversal of 11 years if followed consistently for 20 years.³

This was the reset I've been looking for! I completed my first round in May (compliments of Prolon) and purchased the next two for June and July.

Impressive program support. The resources L-Nutra provides relieve much of the apprehension. Daily group webinars with registered dietitians are available to answer questions, share the science, and review what to expect. The program is so well laid out that "living in the box" is the easy part; transitioning back to real life is actually harder.

L-Nutra also offers medically supervised health programs for guided weight loss, diabetes and heart disease. The physician-led programs run 6-12 months and cost only slightly more than the products themselves.

My first fast results. The greatest gifts I received from the experience were education and awareness, along with an incredible sense of inner calm. (Is this what homeostasis feels like?) The FMD was simpler than I expected, and the results more significant: I lost five pounds and kept them off, noticed smoother skin and hair, clearer eyes and vision, improved sleep with drier nights and the neuropathy in my hands is completely gone. I am in awe of the body's remarkable ability to heal itself.

Choose old habits carefully. The FMD prompted me to reconsider old habits, including my 20 daily supplements, which I discontinued during the fast as the program recommends (medications are continued). I did a post-fast review and have foregone half of them. Alcohol is another consideration. I enjoyed wine too soon after the fast and became extremely nauseated. I now proceed with caution.

A few personal notes: You really want to stick to the program and eat only the evidence-based items provided; however, 140 mg of caffeine daily (about a 10-oz cup of black coffee) is allowed. I did the coffee. And, because autophagy requires significant energy, extensive exercise is discouraged. I felt great training on day four, but got home and crashed. I won't do that again.

Prolon's 5-day FMD ranges from \$182 to \$255, depending on variety and offers. I recommend the Next Gen package, which includes ready-to-eat soups for enhanced taste and convenience. Prolon products are also HSA/FSA eligible.

If you've wanted to try a fast, I highly recommend this program. The science and transformation have made me a huge fan. *Desert Health* readers can receive a 10% discount using code DESERTHEALTH at www.prolonlife.com. Search this article at www.deserthealthnews.com if you have questions or would like to share your experience!

Lauren Del Sarto is founder and publisher of Desert Health. Following her first Prolon fast, she became an affiliate partner to offer Desert Health readers promotional pricing and to encourage others to experience this life-enhancing longevity program.



Del Sarto with her five days of fasting food. (Photo by Sandlight Studio)



The tasty and organic meals are scientifically designed to mimic fasting.



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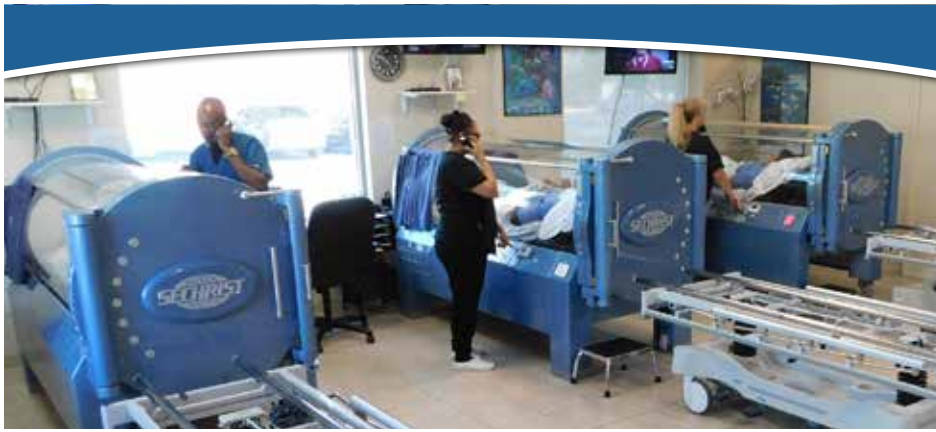
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BLUE ZONES PROJECT
Community News

Why Entrepreneurs May Be Palm Springs' Greatest Well-Being Asset

When most people think about their well-being, they think about doctors, gyms or diets. But what if one of the most powerful influences on our health and happiness is actually our favorite coffee shop, neighborhood restaurant, bookstore, salon, nonprofit or other local business?

That idea sits at the heart of the work Blue Zones is advancing in Palm Springs.

In a recent conversation with a physician, she reminded me of something powerful: our health is shaped less by willpower and more by our environment—the places we spend our time, the people with whom we interact and the choices that are easiest to make. In fact, many of the factors that influence our health occur outside a clinic or gym.

That means local entrepreneurs, both for-profit and nonprofit, have an incredible opportunity. Every day, they make decisions that influence the well-being of employees, customers and the broader community. A restaurant can make healthy options more visible and appealing. A café can become a gathering place where friendships are formed. A workplace can encourage movement, purpose and social connection. A nonprofit can create opportunities for residents to volunteer, connect and feel they belong.

These may seem like small actions, but together they create the conditions for healthier, happier lives. Take Native Foods, a Blue Zones Approved restaurant. It is well-known for its plant-forward menu, but what makes the space special isn't just what comes out of the kitchen. It's what's happening around the tables: conversations, relationships and community.

Or consider Vinophile Café in Palm Springs, another Blue Zones Approved restaurant, where coffee, food and hospitality encourage people to slow down, connect and savor the moment. Sometimes, well-being looks less like a wellness program and more like sitting on a patio with friends, and nowhere else to be.

One of the things I love most about Blue Zones Project Palm Springs is that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Businesses don't need to become health experts or completely reinvent themselves. Instead, we help organizations identify practical, achievable changes that align with their mission, culture, employees and customers.

What's remarkable is that these changes often strengthen organizations just as much as they improve community well-being. Employees who feel connected and valued are more engaged. Customers increasingly seek businesses that reflect their values. Communities with strong gathering places experience greater trust, connection and resilience.

In other words, investing in well-being isn't just good for people; it can also be good for business.

Imagine a city where every coffee shop, restaurant, workplace, nonprofit and neighborhood gathering place contributes—even in small ways—to helping people live better, connect more and belong. That vision isn't decades away. It's already taking shape across Palm Springs.

If you're an entrepreneur, consider this your invitation—not to do more, but to think differently about the impact you already have. Because the next great health intervention in Palm Springs may not happen in a clinic. It might happen at the corner café, the neighborhood market or the small business down the street.

And that's something worth celebrating.

Editorial by Mihai Patru, executive director of Blue Zones Project Palm Springs.

Young Leaders Inspiring a Healthier Coachella

The future of Coachella is brighter because of the passion, leadership and service of the Coachella Valley High School Public Service Academy (PSA) students who partnered with Blue Zones Project Coachella.

Together, these remarkable students contributed nearly 2,000 volunteer hours and participated in more than 25 community events, bringing health, wellness and connection to residents throughout the city. From wellness festivals and cooking demonstrations to tobacco cleanups, educational workshops and community outreach activities, they inspired healthier choices while strengthening community bonds.

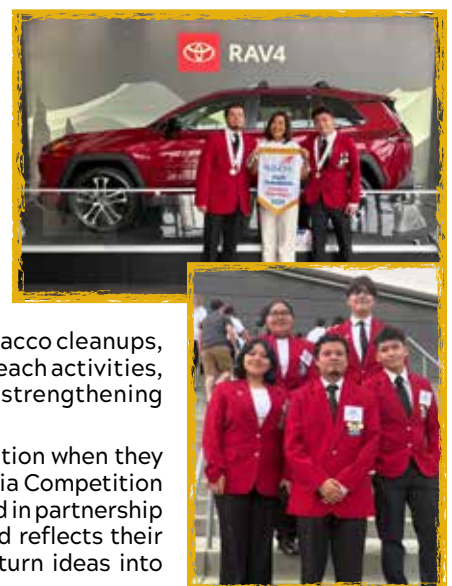
Their dedication earned statewide recognition when they captured First Place at the SkillsUSA California Competition for their Community Action Project completed in partnership with Blue Zones Project Coachella. The award reflects their commitment to service and their ability to turn ideas into meaningful action.

One of their most impactful efforts focused on creating healthier public spaces. Through research, advocacy and community engagement, students championed tobacco-free parks and multi-housing communities. They presented their findings directly to the Coachella City Council, helping spark conversations about protecting families and children from tobacco exposure.

Today, their work continues to influence positive change as the City Council considers an ordinance to prohibit tobacco use in parks and multi-housing complexes throughout Coachella.

As we celebrate these inspiring young leaders, we invite the community to continue the momentum at The Ultimate Summer Wellness Festival on August 8, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., at Rancho 51 in Coachella. This free event will feature wellness activities, healthy food and beverages, yoga, Zumba, meditation, family entertainment and valuable community resources. Together, we can build a healthier, stronger and more vibrant future for everyone.

Editorial by Angela Zepeda, executive director of Blue Zones Project Coachella. Stay connected to local wellness initiatives and upcoming events by visiting www.bluezonesprojectpalmsprings.com and www.bluezonesprojectcoachella.com. Follow on social @bzppalmsprings and @bzpcoachella.



CVHS students win top honors for their community outreach project.



Why Heavy Metal Testing Matters

What my own health journey taught me

By Li Saul with Review by Joseph E. Scherger, MD

Most of us try to make healthy choices. We eat the foods that we are told are good for us. We choose whole grains. We eat fish for protein and omega-3s. We avoid processed foods. We believe we are doing the right thing for our bodies.

But sometimes, even healthy choices can carry hidden risks.

That is why testing for heavy metals—when symptoms or exposure history suggest it may be appropriate—can be so important.

Heavy metals such as arsenic, mercury, lead and cadmium can enter the body through food, water, supplements, environmental exposure or occupational sources. Over time, certain exposures may accumulate or lead to symptoms that are difficult to explain. These symptoms can be vague: tingling, numbness, fatigue, brain fog, headaches, digestive issues, thyroid changes, cholesterol changes or other neurologic and metabolic complaints.

The problem is that many of these symptoms overlap with other conditions. Without testing, heavy metals may never be considered. I learned this personally.

Three years ago, I was eating what I thought was a very healthy, gluten-free diet. Because I was avoiding gluten, I ate a lot of brown rice products: brown rice pasta, brown rice crackers; they seemed like the healthier choice.

But with heavy metal testing, my arsenic level came back as toxic.

That result helped explain the neurologic symptoms I had been experiencing, including tingling in my arms and hands. I stopped eating brown rice products completely. When I was retested recently, my arsenic levels were almost non-existent. Even more importantly, the tingling went away completely.

That experience changed the way I looked at food and health.

In the past few years, my thyroid and cholesterol numbers have been in the normal range. However, recent bloodwork on April 24 showed that my levels had changed drastically enough to raise real concern. My TSH levels showed subclinical hypothyroidism and my cholesterol level shot up from normal to 270 mg/dL. Because thyroid function plays an important role in metabolism, including how the body processes cholesterol, those changes were included in the same investigation. While we cannot say heavy metals were the only factor, the question became impossible to ignore: could toxic exposure be contributing to a broader disruption in my body?

I quickly learned that mercury exposure can disrupt thyroid hormone production and regulation. To my surprise, my mercury level was elevated to 23 mcg/L, well above the lab's reference range of less than 11 mcg/L. The likely source was something most people consider healthy: frequent seafood consumption.

I had been eating fish more than a couple of times a week, including salmon, sea bass, ling cod and tinned Atlantic mackerel. Fish can be an excellent source of protein and nutrients, but some fish contain more mercury than others. And frequency matters. What may be fine occasionally can become a problem when eaten often over time.

My doctor, Joe Scherger, MD, and I looked to diet once again. With his recommendation, I reduced higher-mercury fish, became much more selective about seafood and shifted toward other protein sources. I also added supportive whole foods for my thyroid: one Brazil nut daily for selenium, along with fiber-rich fruits such as whole kiwi and dragon fruit. I also reduced consumption of goitrogenic, cruciferous vegetables like arugula, broccoli and kale (especially in their raw forms) as eating too many goitrogens can affect thyroid health by stopping iodine from working properly. The thyroid gland requires a steady supply of iodine to function.



Mercury in seafood is another reason to consider moderation.

These changes are not meant to be a “detox cure.” They are part of a practical plan: reduce the likely source of exposure, support the body nutritionally and retest to see whether the mercury level is moving in the right direction.

After a retest on June 12, all of my levels returned to normal. There was no sign of subclinical hypothyroidism, and my cholesterol has dropped from a scary 270 mg/dL to a happy 180 mg/dL. Although the heavy metal test won't be back for a couple of weeks, these results help answer the most important question: Did removing or reducing the exposure make a measurable difference? Yes indeed, it did! I am forever grateful to Dr. Scherger for being proactive about heavy metal testing. The original results may have prompted some doctors to prescribe thyroid medication and statins.

My hope in sharing this story is not to make people afraid of food; it is to encourage awareness. If you are eating a restricted diet, the same foods every day, consuming a lot of rice-based products, eating seafood frequently (even lower-mercury seafood), or you are experiencing unexplained neurologic symptoms, thyroid changes, cholesterol changes or other persistent symptoms, it may be worth asking your doctor whether heavy metal testing is appropriate.

The goal is not panic. The goal is prevention.

Testing gave me answers. Answers gave me direction. And direction helped me make changes that are hopefully improving my health.

Often, the missing piece is not another medication or supplement; it is identifying what your body has been exposed to and removing the source. We cannot correct what we do not measure. And in my case, measuring made all the difference.

Li Saul is a resident of La Quinta. Dr. Scherger is the founder of Restore Health Disease Reversal in Indian Wells, a clinic dedicated to reversing chronic medical conditions. To schedule a consultation, call (760) 898.9663 or visit www.restorehealth.me.



Many gluten-free products are made with brown rice and should be eaten in moderation.



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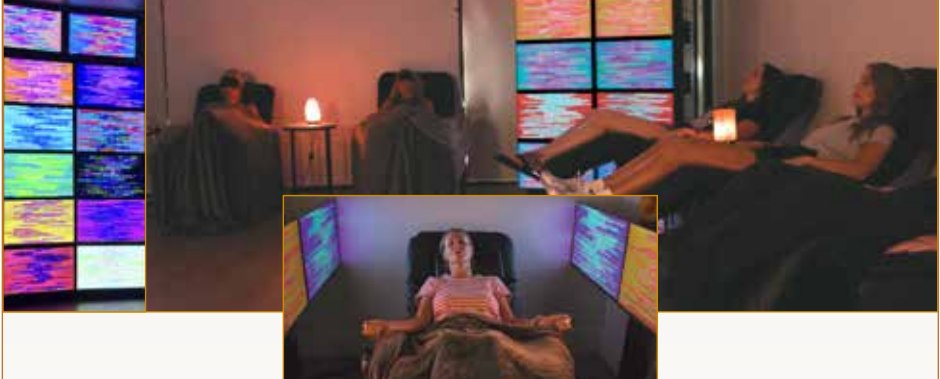
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GLP-1s: Strength Training Is Not Optional

If you are taking Ozempic, Wegovy, Mounjaro or any other GLP-1 medication, the scale is probably moving in the right direction. The question is, what is happening to the rest of your body while that number goes down?

Here is the part your doctor may not have spent enough time on. Clinical trials, including the STEP 1 trial for semaglutide and the SURMOUNT-1 trial for tirzepatide, showed that 26%-40% of the total weight loss on these medications was lean tissue, not fat.^{1,2} A 2025 case series from Texas Tech University, published in *Sage Open Medical Case Reports*, took it a step further and found that patients who combined their GLP-1 medication with resistance training three to five days per week, along with a higher protein intake, were able to preserve or even gain lean tissue during treatment.³

These results tell you two things: the muscle loss is real and significant, and strength training is the proven way to stop it.

Muscle is the engine behind your metabolism

Muscle burns calories even while you are sitting still. When you lose it, your resting metabolic rate drops. That means the moment you stop taking the medication or taper your dose, weight regain becomes much more likely because the engine that was keeping you lean has slowed.

For adults over 40, this compounds a problem that is already happening naturally. After 50, most people lose 3%-5% of their muscle mass per decade.⁴ Layer GLP-1 muscle loss on top of age-related muscle loss, and you are accelerating a decline that directly affects your mobility, your balance, your joint health and your independence.

Strength over cardio

Your doctor probably told you to exercise. So, you started walking. Walking is great for your heart and your mood, but it does not create the load your muscles need to stay strong.

The European Association for the Study of Obesity states that resistance training, not aerobic exercise, preserves lean body mass during weight loss.⁵ Walking 10,000 steps a day will not change the muscle loss equation; strength training is the answer.

The research converges on the same recommendation: resistance training two to three times per week using compound movements like squats, deadlifts, rows and presses; progressive overload so the challenge increases over time; and aerobic activity three to five times per week as a complement, not the foundation. Strength first and cardio second.

Knowledge and flexibility matter

GLP-1 side effects, including nausea, reduced appetite, fatigue and dizziness, are common, especially during dose adjustments. Your training program needs to flex around those realities. Some days you feel strong and your coach pushes you; some days you are fighting nausea and the session adapts. That is exactly why working with a personal trainer who understands GLP-1 medications makes such a difference. A random gym routine cannot adjust to how you feel on any given day, but a good coach can.

Lead with protein

Most people on GLP-1 are simply not eating enough protein to support muscle retention. Guidelines recommend 1.2-2.0 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight daily for GLP-1 users.⁶ For a 160-pound person, that is roughly 87-145 grams per day. When your appetite is gone, hitting those numbers requires planning. Every meal needs to lead with protein.

Building muscle while losing fat means you are creating a body that can maintain its new weight after the prescription ends. Your metabolism stays higher and your body has the engine to support the weight loss long-term.

The medication handles the calorie deficit. The hard part is making sure what is left when the weight comes off is a body that is strong, functional and built to maintain results.

Gerry Washack is the owner of Strong Republic Personal Training with locations in Palm Desert, La Quinta and Palm Springs. Visit www.strongrepublicpersonaltraining.com.

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Aging Solo: You Don't Have to Go It Alone

By Kim Linder, CSA, GCM, CDP, LTCCP

Sarah, 78, a retired sociology professor who was married for 42 years, became a widow a year ago when her husband, Jim, unexpectedly passed away. Their son lives far away and often travels for work. Sarah, who is shy and prefers to be alone, now finds herself struggling with her grief and is overwhelmed with having to make all the routine decisions on her own.

Brian, 62, a mechanical engineer, never married and had no significant other. He liked his freedom to see the world and would stay abroad for months at a time. He belonged to international business organizations and managed his personal finances well. However, recently Brian started to feel ill. His primary care physician had him do a series of blood tests, which revealed that he had cancer and would require a series of treatments.

Tom, 85, is a family caregiver for his wife Joan, who has advanced dementia. While technically not alone, he often feels isolated as he struggles to manage caregiving responsibilities, household duties, medical appointments and his own declining health.

Three different situations. One thing in common. They are all aging solo.

According to the Pew Research Center, millions of aging adults are having challenges that can feel overwhelming at times--especially when facing them without a traditional support system.¹ Whether due to a loss of a spouse, divorce, lack of family nearby or caring for a partner with significant physical or cognitive limitations, many people today are finding themselves aging solo.

The good news is that aging solo does not have to mean aging alone. Here are important things to consider:

- **Build a network of support.** This can be family, trusted friends, neighbors or members of your faith community.
- **Maintain social connections either online or in person.** Combat loneliness by joining clubs, fitness groups or community activities. Volunteering or taking educational classes can help develop meaningful relationships and create a reliable circle of support.
- **Make technology your friend.** Video calls, medical alert systems, medication reminders and smart home devices can add convenience, safety and connection. Valley senior centers are a good resource for classes and assistance to help you learn.
- **Hire a senior advocate.** This growing industry offers seniors a helping hand in a broad scope of areas. As certified professionals, they offer assistance, assurance and peace of mind for those navigating life alone in their later years.

There are significant challenges to aging solo. Remember that planning ahead and asking for assistance is not a sign of weakness; it's a sign of wisdom.

Kim Linder is a family caregiver coach, geriatric care manager, certified dementia practitioner and long-term care claims professional. She is the founder of Senior Holistic Care Advocates and can be reached at kim@seniorholisticcare.com or (760) 969.0700. www.seniorholisticcareadvocates.com.

Reference: 1) <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2026/02/26/family-caregiving-in-an-aging-america/>

The Pause Before the Pivot

Continued from page 11

And that's the part no one talks about enough. The pivot is rarely graceful; it's messy, confusing, uncomfortable. It can feel like standing between chapters--no longer who you were, but not yet certain of who you're becoming. I know because I've lived it. And perhaps you're living it, too. If so, please hear this: You are not behind or broken. You do not need to have everything figured out. Some of the most courageous people I know are not the ones with all the answers, but the ones willing to sit in the uncertainty long enough to hear their own truth.

Mindfulness teaches us that every moment offers information. Our thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, stress signals and intuitive nudges are constantly communicating with us.

The challenge isn't receiving the message; the challenge is being with it and slowing down long enough to hear it.

So, if you find yourself in a season of transition, consider this your reminder: You do not need to rush your next move. You do not need to force clarity. You do not need to panic because you don't yet know what's next. Sometimes the most powerful move you can make is not forward, or backward. It's becoming still enough to listen. Because often, the clarity you're seeking isn't found by pushing harder. It's found in the spacious pause before the pivot.

Christy Curtis is a transformational wellness educator and coach and founder of Grounded Joy Wellness. She can be reached at christycurtiswellness@gmail.com. www.groundedjoywellness.org.



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When Mom Hates Every Outfit

Shopping struggles may be about more than clothing

By Laurel Fuqua, RN, MSN

Summer often brings more family visits, vacations, weddings, lunches and gatherings, and with them, a renewed awareness that an aging parent may need a few new outfits or seasonal clothing updates.

As a geriatric care manager, I frequently hear versions of the same concern from families: "Mom needs clothes, but every time we buy something, she hates it." "We took her shopping, but she became overwhelmed." "She says she wants new things, but then nothing feels right once it arrives."

Families are often left frustrated and confused. Why has something as simple as buying clothes suddenly become so difficult? What many caregivers do not realize is that shopping resistance in older adults is extremely common, and it is often about far more than clothing.

Shopping requires more energy than we often realize. All of us, even younger adults, sometimes can become overwhelmed when shopping. Many have experienced abandoning a cart full of online purchases, leaving clothing in a dressing room, feeling decision fatigue after scrolling endless options or ordering multiple sizes only to return everything later.

Now imagine layering onto that daily fatigue, vision or hearing changes, mobility limitations, arthritis, cognitive slowing, a changing body, balance concerns, sensory sensitivity, anxiety and grief around aging.

Shopping involves visual processing, decision-making, physical stamina, concentration, body awareness and emotional energy. What looks like "pickiness" may actually be exhaustion or overwhelm.

One of the most overlooked aspects of aging is how emotionally connected clothing can be to identity. Many older adults quietly struggle with the feeling that nothing fits the same anymore, styles feel unfamiliar, fabrics feel uncomfortable or their body no longer feels recognizable.

For some older adults, rejecting clothing is not really about the outfit itself. It may reflect loss of control, frustration with aging or fear of change.

Families often unintentionally make shopping harder by offering too many options at once. Questions like "Which one do you want?" or "Do you like any of these?" can feel overwhelming rather than helpful. Instead, simplify. Offer only one or two choices at a time. For example: "Would you prefer the blue sweater or the soft beige one?" Reducing choices often reduces anxiety.

One of the best strategies is surprisingly simple: look at what your loved one already wears repeatedly. Notice favorite fabrics, sleeve lengths, colors, necklines and fit preferences. Then look for similar items rather than completely new styles.

At 94, most people are not looking to reinvent their wardrobe. They are looking for comfort, familiarity, dignity and ease. If she loves one cardigan, buying several similar versions may work far better than introducing entirely new options.

For many older adults, stores themselves become overstimulating: bright lights, noise, walking distances, mirrors, dressing rooms, crowds and pressure. Instead, consider bringing a few carefully selected items home and presenting them calmly in a familiar environment.

No rushing. No pressure. No marathon shopping trips.

When shopping for an older loved one becomes difficult, simplifying the process can often help significantly. To summarize these practical recommendations:

- Identify two favorite existing outfits and use them as a guide.
- Buy close variations rather than entirely new styles.
- Limit choices to one or two options at a time.
- Try clothing at home rather than in stores whenever possible.
- Prioritize softness, comfort and ease of dressing.
- Expect slower decisions and allow extra time.
- Keep the emotional tone light, calm and pressure-free.

Most importantly, remember that shopping resistance is rarely about being "difficult." Often, it is simply another example of how aging changes the way people experience the world around them.

Laurel Fuqua is a registered nurse, geriatric care manager and regional director with About Senior Solutions. She combines her 25 years of experience with the company's 19 years in California for their new Coachella Valley branch. She can be reached at (760) 338.3170 or laurelfuqua@aboutsensorsolutions.com.



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Local Find: Málmal Café

Nourishing eatery open to all

By Lauren Del Sarto

You may not yet know Palm Springs's Málmal Café. That's because when you keep company with one of America's top spas, you sometimes get overlooked.

But this nourishing gem is a welcoming neighborhood eatery open to the public daily from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tucked inside The Spa at Séc-he, it has a dedicated entrance located on the corner of N. Calle Encilia and E. Tahquitz Canyon Way and is worth a visit.

Whether meeting friends or holding a business meeting, Malmal's beautifully natural design sets the stage for a relaxing break in your day. But what makes this place really special are the locally sourced seasonal ingredients and unique menu offerings. From freshly made smoothies enhanced with turmeric and ginger to kale salads dressed in honey-citrus vinaigrette, from rice noodle tempeh spring rolls to their chicken salad sandwich with alfalfa sprouts, the emphasis is on food that honors body and mind. Enjoy hummus and avocado toast in the morning, or hummus and olive tapenade in the afternoon; gluten-free options are also available.

"Fresh, seasonal ingredients not only deliver superior flavor but also retain more nutrients, supporting guests' health from the inside out," says Executive Chef Brian Kenney. He adds that local sourcing also reduces environmental impact and fosters important community connections. "By aligning our cuisine with wellness principles, we nourish body, mind and spirit while celebrating the region's unique flavors and sustainable agricultural practices."

Next time you're looking for a healthy meal in Palm Springs, consider Málmal for its relaxing ambiance and fresh, feel-good food.

Málmal Café is located at 200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way. For more information, visit www.thespaatseche.com or call (866) 777.3243.



Locally sourced ingredients add to the café's unique offerings.

Moringa Leaf and Moong Dal

By Valli Bhavireddy

Living in the Coachella Valley, our bodies work hard against the heat, dryness and long sunny days. This South Indian recipe was passed down from my grandmother and is a gentle, daily way to replenish what the desert takes out of us.

Moringa leaves are among the most nutrient-dense greens on earth, high in calcium, iron and antioxidants. Both moringa and split yellow moong dal (lentils) are naturally cooling foods in Ayurvedic medicine, helping the body manage heat from the inside out.

This was an everyday dish in my grandmother's home: light, healing and made with fresh moringa leaves picked that morning. What makes this recipe special is that key ingredients are now grown locally at Prema's Permaculture & Composting Site in Palm Springs. Discovering the same plants my grandmother grows on her farm in India, thriving here, was a full-circle moment for me!

Serving size: 4 Total time: 20 minutes

Ingredients: (available fresh from Prema's)

- 1 cup yellow moong dal, rinsed (The Spice Rack, Cathedral City, or online)
- 8-10 full bunches of fresh moringa leaves,* washed and stripped from the stems
- 2 green chillies,* slit (adjust to your spice level)
- 1 sprig fresh curry leaves*
- Fresh coriander,* finely chopped
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp ghee (to finish)
- Pinches of salt, turmeric and chili powder

Instructions:

1. Bring a pot of water to a boil, add 1 cup rinsed moong dal and cook for about 10 minutes until it's about 90% done. You want the lentils tender but still holding their shape; do NOT overcook into a mush. Drain and set aside.
2. Prep the leaves. While the dal boils, rinse the moringa leaves well in water and strip them from the stems (which are too fibrous to eat). Set the clean leaves aside.
3. While the dal cooks, sauté the aromatics. Heat olive oil in a heavy pan (or kadai) over medium heat. Add cumin seeds and let them sizzle. Add the chopped onion, green chillies and curry leaves. Sprinkle in a little salt and sauté until the onions turn translucent and soft.
4. Add the moringa leaves and sauté for about 5 minutes, until the leaves change color; they'll deepen to a darker green and feel just-wilted. Don't overcook; the leaves will turn crispy and lose their tender freshness.
5. Add a pinch of turmeric powder, chili powder and salt to the sauté, then add the cooked dal to the pan and mix gently. Close the lid and let it sit on low heat for 3 minutes so the dal and leaves come together and absorb each other's flavor.
6. Uncover, drizzle in the ghee and toss gently. This is the moment the dish comes alive, with the ghee carrying the aroma of curry leaves and toasted cumin through the whole pan. Stir in fresh coriander and serve hot.

Serve with steamed rice, a spoon of ghee on top and a side of pickle or yogurt. Simple, nourishing, and the way Grandma made it on hot summer days.

Valli Bhavireddy is a Palm Springs resident from Hyderabad, South India. For more info on Prema's farm, call (714) 394.6944 or visit www.permacultureandcompost.com.



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AUGUST 6

Women Leaders Forum Happy 2 Hours

Come mix and mingle with the WLF community at their casual August get-together. 5:30-7:30p. For location and additional information, visit www.WLFdesert.org.

AUGUST 8 • Wellness Day at The Shops

Spend a cool evening learning, walking and winning at this indoor wellness expo. Discover practices, products and resources, enjoy an insightful presentation on how food affects your body and get your steps in for chances to win prizes. The Shops at Palm Desert. 3-6p. Free and open to all! www.shopsatpalmdesert.com/events. (Read more p.22)

AUGUST 8

The Ultimate Summer Wellness Festival

Blue Zones Project Coachella invites everyone to come enjoy this free event featuring wellness activities, healthy food and beverages, yoga, Zumba, meditation, family entertainment and valuable community resources. Rancho 51, Coachella. 9a-1p. www.bzpcoachella.com.

SEPTEMBER 3

Women Leaders Forum's Season Opener

Members and non-members are invited to an evening of celebration, connection and a sneak peek at this season's inspirational programming. 5:30-7:30p. For location and additional information, visit www.WLFdesert.org. (Read more p.22)

SEPTEMBER 5

A Luncheon with Nancy Kerrigan

Celebrating 40 years of supporting local figure skating, The Desert Figure Skating Club invites you to a fundraising luncheon with Nancy Kerrigan, Olympic Medalist and US Figure Skating National Champion. Agua Caliente Resort and Spa, Rancho Mirage. 11a-1:30p. Tickets: \$125 www.thedesertfigureskatingclub.com



OCTOBER 16-18

Miracle Hill Spa Association Wellness Weekend

Come experience an exciting and educational lineup of wellness seminars, activities, hands-on experiential classes and discounted spa day passes for an immersive and exclusive mind-body experience. Desert Hot Springs. Friday-Sunday. Limited tickets will sell out \$49-\$149. www.miraclehillspas.com.



Wellness, Water and a Weekend of Renewal

By Lauren Del Sarto



Healthy dining is one of eight categories to explore.

and discounted resort day passes. For a fully immersive experience, guests are encouraged to stay at one of the participating properties as special room rates will also be offered.

While the MHSA's popular Spa Tour centers on visiting the area's many boutique resorts, Wellness Weekend shifts the focus to participatory activities at each location, encouraging self-care and deeper engagement.

"We are delighted to bring the valley and visitors together for a weekend on Miracle Hill to learn, connect, soak and celebrate what makes this corner of the desert unique and genuinely restorative," says event organizer Rayce Jonsrud.



The Del Sarto's will make it another weekend getaway on Miracle Hill.

Tickets go on sale August 1 and range from \$49 to \$149. Space is limited and the weekend is expected to sell out, so interested attendees are encouraged to sign up for the newsletter at www.miraclehillspas.com for priority access.

For more information, visit www.miraclehillspas.com or call (760) 329.6411 x239.

The Miracle Hill Spa Association (MHSA) is proud to announce Wellness Weekend, taking place October 16-18 in the Spa Zone of Desert Hot Springs. The immersive, educational and one-of-a-kind event will take place at 14 member spas, including Miracle Manor, Azure Palm Hot Spring Resort, The Spring and Two Bunch Palms, to name a few.

Guests will enjoy three days of mindful movement, hands-on learning and mineral spring soaking with the opportunity to take part in 80 activities spanning eight categories: educational workshops, yoga and fitness sessions, guided meditation, spa treatments, dining experiences, special events



Chef Van preps for a juicing class at The Good House.

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Love for Locals

Continued from page 1

Rejuvenate Inside & Out (cont.)

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Live Well Clinic's
Sonja Fung, ND

JustUs Skincare (see p.10)
For skin that's lived, laughed and spent time in the sun. Founded by valley women who wanted effective skincare designed for mature, dry and sensitive skin. Crafted to replenish moisture, strengthen the skin barrier and restore a healthy, radiant glow—even in the desert.
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Evelyn and Brook

Try Something New

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Immerse In Healing Waters

Miracle Hill Mineral Spring Spas (see p.20)
Soak in the storied mineral springs of Miracle Hill, where 14 enchanting resorts await your arrival for a day or a stay. Explore the spas and contact your desired destination for summer offers on day passes and overnight stays.
Love4Locals: Vary per location
Sign me up: Start your journey at www.miraclehillspas.com

Azure Palm Hot Springs Resort & Spa
Your oasis awaits with meandering paths and multiple soaking tubs. Take a cool dip in Southern California's largest mineral spring pool, stroll through the reflexology stream and refresh with a cold bucket shower. Come for the day or enjoy overnight offers.
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Azure's refreshing
bucket shower

Escape & Indulge

Spa Desert Springs, JW Marriott Resort (see p.9)
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Mind sync chairs at
Spa Desert Springs

Grow & Evolve

The Architecture of You
Cell Rejuvenation Spa's Stephanie Gray, LMT, (see. p.12) invites you to gather with family or friends to explore how childhood experiences, family dynamics, relationships, culture and nervous system patterns shape your behaviors. Gain self-awareness, clarity and tools for transformation.
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Life coach
Christy Curtis

Grounded Joy Wellness (see p.11)
Seeking inner growth? Transformational Wellness Coach Christy Curtis offers classes and programs designed for women, kids and all generations to find confidence, connection, clarity and calm.
Love4Local Adults:
• **July 10. Nourish + Nurture: Rooted & Radiant Summer Reset.** For women seeking more energy, balance, joy and connection through mindful nourishment and restorative self-care. (5:30-8:30p) \$85 includes food and wine.
• **August 14. Nourish + Nurture: Rooted Together.** Explore emotional well-being, body image, self-worth and resilience through nourishing food, meaningful conversation and restorative practices. Unique experience for mothers, daughters, grandmothers, sisters, friends and women of all ages. (5:30-8:30p). \$85 includes food and wine.
Love4Local Kids:
• **July 27-31. Summer Unplugged.** A one-of-a-kind experience blending yoga, mindfulness, movement and connection. Kids develop focus, emotional awareness and self-confidence while having fun, making friends and learning life tools. Youth-sized take-home yoga mat provided. Ages 8-10: \$149 (12:30-1:15p) | Ages 11-13: \$169 (1:30-2:15p)
• **August 3-7. The Reset: Level Up Before School Starts.** Help your teen start the school year feeling confident and prepared. Through yoga movements, mindfulness, social-emotional learning and practical life skills, students build resilience, strengthen self-confidence and develop tools for success in and out of the classroom. Grades 9-12. Through July 10: \$199 | After July 10: \$249 (12:30p-1:45p).
Sign me up: christycurtiswellness@gmail.com. www.groundedjoywellness.org

Promotional offers are valid July 1 through August 31, 2026, unless otherwise noted and restrictions may apply. For details, please reach out to each business directly.

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Get Involved in WLF

Our team will be busy behind the scenes laying the groundwork for another exciting season. We are looking for members who want to join a committee and help shape what's ahead.



Subscribe to our newsletter to learn more about WLF, our events, and how to get involved at www.wlfdesert.org



Be a Part of Wellness Day at The Shops

A cool way to meet, learn, participate and win!

The Shops at Palm Desert is hosting its third annual Wellness Day at The Shops, August 8, from 3-6 p.m. The festive afternoon, dedicated to health, beauty, fitness and living well, presents the opportunity to meet local health and wellness practitioners, learn tips to thrive, try new modalities, take part in activities and win valuable prizes.

Wellness vendor fair. Discover a wide range of health-focused products, services and resources from local wellness businesses, organizations (including many you see in *Desert Health*) and in-center retailers. Enjoy samples, special offers, activities, information and insights related to medical resources, holistic wellness and more.

Special guest speaker. Enjoy a complimentary presentation by integrative primary care physician Edith Jones-Poland, MD, entitled, "How Food Speaks to Your Body." What does that apple tell your DNA? How about that cookie? In this inspiring and informative presentation, Dr. Jones-Poland will discuss how food directly affects your body at the cellular level, with take-home tips to help you live your best life. The 30-minute presentation will be followed by a Q&A period to answer your questions.

Step and spin challenge. Guests can receive a free pedometer (while supplies last), track their steps during the event and earn a chance to spin the prize wheel for fun gifts from The Shops stores, including books, accessories, apparel and more.



The vendor fair will feature many local medical and wellness businesses.

Passport prizes. Pick up your Wellness Day Passport at the registration table and collect stamps from participating vendors for a chance to win one of three abundant gift baskets.

Enjoy upbeat music with a live DJ and stop by the photo booth for free printed photos to capture memories. Wellness Day at The Shops is free to attend and open to the community. Bring your family, invite a friend and enjoy an afternoon focused on feeling good, learning something new and connecting with local wellness resources.

Register for the event to be entered into the grand prize drawing for a one-year gym membership from PURFIT Athletic! One lucky winner will be randomly selected from all registered attendees and announced on Monday, August 10. Walk-ins are also welcome!

To learn more and register for Wellness Day, visit www.shopsatpalmdesert.com/events. To request a vendor application, participation fee and setup details, please email Nayyan Chandler, Marketing and Business Development Manager at The Shops, at nchandler@shopsatpalmdesert.com.



Guest Speaker Edith Jones-Poland, MD

WLF Celebrates 25 Years of Making an Impact

By Vikki Dorsey

Twenty-five years ago, Women Leaders Forum (WLF) founder Mary T. Roche had a vision: create a forum where women could gather, connect and grow as leaders. She believed empowering women empower women, and that simple, powerful truth has been the north star of this non-profit organization. WLF is where like-minded professional women work together to make a difference in the community.

From preparing the next generation of leaders to honoring trailblazers throughout the valley, WLF is proud of every sponsor, donor, volunteer and member who makes our goals possible. Everything we accomplish is the direct result of the passionate and dedicated individuals who work behind the scenes. WLF's success is the direct result of community leaders committed to leading with intention and excellence. It's women from different backgrounds empowering one another and forging deep friendships as they pay it forward to the next generation through the Young Women Leaders educational scholarship program.

This year, WLF proudly awarded 27 scholarships to local high school seniors at the 13th annual Women Who Rule Awards and Scholarship Luncheon. Program graduates hail from Palm Desert, Palm Springs, Cathedral City, Desert Mirage, Shadow Hills, Indio, Desert Hot Springs and La Quinta. This fall, these bright scholars will fulfill their academic dreams as they head to College of the Desert, UC San Diego, UC Riverside, UC Santa Barbara, San Diego State University, CSU Long Beach, CSU San Bernardino, CSU San Marcos, CSU Los Angeles, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Grand Canyon University, Virginia Military Institute and Delaware County Community College.

We are grateful to our sponsors, donors and mentors for their contributions, time and resources. These students represent the future of the Coachella Valley, and to say we are proud of their accomplishments is an understatement.

Whether you are new to the valley, seeking network opportunities or looking to give back, we invite you to consider WLF membership. Not only is this a wonderful organization to connect with like-minded women from all backgrounds, but programming also helps you to grow as a leader, support other women and make a lasting impact in the community.

As a non-profit organization, WLF is fully supported by volunteers. We are currently planning our 2026-27 season and looking for individuals who can lend their expertise in grant writing, sponsorship, event programming and mentoring our young women leaders.

Our board and committees are already planning an exciting season. Watch for our Happy 2 Hours event in August and season opener in September. On behalf of the entire WLF organization, thank you for 25 extraordinary years. Here's to the next exciting chapter together!

Vikki Dorsey is the incoming president of Women Leaders Forum for the 2026-2027 season. For more information on how you can get involved, email info@wlfdesert.org or visit www.wlfdesert.org.



WLF offers members community, philanthropy and education.

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