



# Desert Health<sup>®</sup>

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November/December 2020

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## Be GOOD to YOU

**P**andemic fatigue is setting in, and for many, so is apathy. Frustration at the limitations imposed on us as individuals and the world at large can be harmful, especially when we let it affect the way we treat ourselves and others. Apathy can lead to unsafe behaviors and disregard for those around us, which will only set us back individually and as a community.

Mental distress and substance abuse are on the rise, but professionals say this is a normal response to what's happening right now. So, you are not alone. We could all use a little help, and it starts with self-care.

There's one thing with which we have all been blessed - more time. Let's use it wisely and make more time for self-care. You are truly the most important thing that matters right now. So, be good to you.

Making self-care a priority is a mindset. You first have to commit to yourself, then create positive activities that take you out of the bigger picture, even if it's just for a while. A strolling walk,

spending time in nature, a bath or simply sitting still and quieting the mind brings us into the present moment and allows us to let it all go. We need that right now.

If every day feels the same, change up your morning routine to create a fresh start. Instead of turning on the news or going to your computer with a cup of coffee, begin with soft music, meditation or silence under the cool morning sky.

Find a passion to look forward to each day. Beyond a good book or challenging puzzle, put your hands to work. Create. Do something you used to do - or have never done before. Paint, build a bird house, grow new vegetables. Use this unique period in your life to do something you will remember for decades to come; those are the memories we will want to take with us.

These small steps can make a big difference in your overall health, and bring you peace of mind. Self-care leads to healthier decisions and will help keep you safe, sane, vigilant and heart-centered. It starts with you, so be good to you.



## Eat, Drink and Be Healthy

Substitutes you'll savor



By Lauren Del Sarto

**W**henever I meet someone with good intentions to start eating healthier, they always say, "I just can't seem to give up (their thing)." It's usually cheese, ice cream, pumpkin spice lattes, or something of the sort. I get it. We all have our comfort foods, and with the chilly weather and holiday season, those cravings seem to get stronger.

So, we decided to start a column on healthy alternatives, replacements for your go-to favorites that will satisfy those cravings and set you on the path to making healthier choices. We all want to live long and thrive; that is our shared goal, and believe me, nobody is perfect, including me.

Making dietary changes can feel overwhelming. No one wants to deny themselves of anything, so change has to be simple, and the alternatives have to taste good and satisfying. We will keep that in mind for this column. Just set your motivation (lose weight, reduce cholesterol, increase energy, etc.) and let that goal be your inspiration. Remember, nobody is perfect and change takes time. This will be fun!

It is important to love food that fuels you and to pass on that which causes harm. There are two

leading principles to embrace to help ease your transition and add to long-lasting results.

First, sugar is the devil. It is the leading cause of inflammation, deemed the root of most chronic disease, and the favorite food of cancer cells. The sooner you ditch the addiction, the better off you'll be. Secondly, healthy fats (olive, avocado, coconut, nuts) are good for you, and starting your day with ample amounts will fuel your brain, curb your appetite and put your body in fat-burning mode. *Desert Health* covers these two principles often and you can find related articles on our website.

### Let's eat!

When you start making healthier choices, you'll be surprised at how much more food you can eat without gaining weight or suffering the consequences.

Let's consider this delicious scoop of chocolate-covered ice cream with nuts and chocolate chips. What if it contained 2 grams of sugar, a lot of healthy fiber and only good fats? Wouldn't you feel better about eating it?

Well, it does exist, and I eat it often. Ice cream is my "thing." There is nothing that quite compares

*Continued on page 24*

The purpose of our lives is to be happy.  
- Dalia Lama



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## Celebrating Life

This October, our daughter, Erin, got married and we welcomed a new son-in-law, Jason, to the family. A year of ups and downs culminated in a more intimate affair, and in the end, it was simply magical. What didn't change is at the heart of it all: family, celebration and love.

As we enter the holidays, we all ponder plans to connect with loved ones and how celebrations will look this year. Whether it's virtual or a variation of holidays past, being there for each other is what truly matters.

With this issue, our health and wellness community has come together for you. You'll find many empowering articles on taking care of yourself and your loved ones during these extraordinary times.

Thank you for reading, sharing, commenting and reaching out to ask questions on our website or social media. We'll keep the conversations going, and the doctor or I will always get back to you.

As we wrap up our 10th anniversary year, we are filled with gratitude and send you and your family wishes for a magical holiday season ~

*Lauren*

Lauren Del Sarto  
Founder/Publisher



Celebrating the union of daughter, Erin, granddaughter, Bella, and new son-in-law, Jason, in an intimate outdoor ceremony.



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## It Takes a Team

### A multidisciplinary approach to Parkinson's

By Lauren Del Sarto

Parkinson's is often considered a hopeless disease. There is currently no cure or means of stopping the progression of the condition, which robs its patients of motor and cognitive skills, as well as their dignity.

But according to Desert Care Network's (DCN) board-certified neurologist John Legge, MD, today, there is much to be hopeful about. When patients, families, doctors and community groups work together, progression can slow, and quality of life can be greatly improved.

Dr. Legge, a movement disorder specialist, recently joined the DCN team from UCSD in San Diego. He is a patient advocate with a passion for what he calls "The Big 3:" essential tremors, dystonia and especially Parkinson's.

"I really think Parkinson's is an important area, and there is a lot of exciting work going on in the field, so I am particularly passionate about that," he states. "I realize there is a shortage of movement disorder specialists in the desert, especially considering the number of Parkinson's cases we have here."

Legge's interest in serving seniors grew from taking care of his grandmother with Alzheimer's. "Being a caregiver yourself, you learn a lot about that side of the disease process." He is a proponent for whole-person care and a team approach to meet patient needs. "Treatment of Parkinson's needs to be a multidisciplinary team working closely with the family. This care is a journey with a group, and I really stress community involvement." He emphasizes the importance of diet and lifestyle, adding that much of the early research for Parkinson's has been extrapolated from what helps Alzheimer's patients, pointing to a Mediterranean diet high in healthy fats and low in carbs.

Exercise is also a key component. "If you are active, whether it's Tai Chi, cycling, swimming, yoga or even boxing, you are calling on the motor circuit in your brain to work, and that is what is being attacked in Parkinson's. When patients exercise and take their medications, their medicines work better, and because they are exercising, they progress slower and need less medication in moving forward. They get a current and future benefit from it, and I really preach that."

He notes that exercise is the only thing known to slow disease progression. "So, it really is 'use it or lose it.' Patients will do much better, and it is a critical part of treatment."

Socialization also plays a role - whether from a local senior center, group exercise class or singing program. "Anything that works the voice and mind is a tool in the toolbox for socialization."

As for medical care, a patient's team may include physical therapists, occupational therapists to provide special equipment, speech pathologists, a neuropsychologist to determine behavior and cognitive changes, and sometimes a neurosurgeon, in addition to a neurologist and primary care physician. "I am proud to be a part of the team here at Desert Care Network. With three hospitals, we cover all areas of need and have numerous professionals with whom to collaborate."

Legge also enjoys teaching the next generation of doctors and was drawn to the fact that Desert Regional Medical Center has an ACGME accredited neurology residency program.

"There is medical literature that demonstrates that patients that are treated at an academic center have better outcomes than those who go to non-academic centers. I am a firm believer that with more eyes on a case and more information and ideas discussed amongst a group, people receive better care. It's a fun environment to be around and very rewarding."

As current treatment options are limited, Legge also encourages patients to consider clinical trials. He states that Parkinson's research primarily focuses on three categories: motor (physical symptoms), non-motor (primarily anxiety and bodily functions) and disease modification.

"Until we can really understand what is causing this disease, it is challenging to find an effective therapy. So, some of the trials are diagnostic; patients are sacrificing their time understanding that they personally will not receive anything but the satisfaction of knowing they are helping the next generation of those affected. This database of work will eventually crack the code." Within a 250-mile radius of Palm Springs, he has identified over 100 clinical trial sites for Parkinson's. "Clinical trials are not just for those late in the disease. They are good to offer at all points of the trajectory."

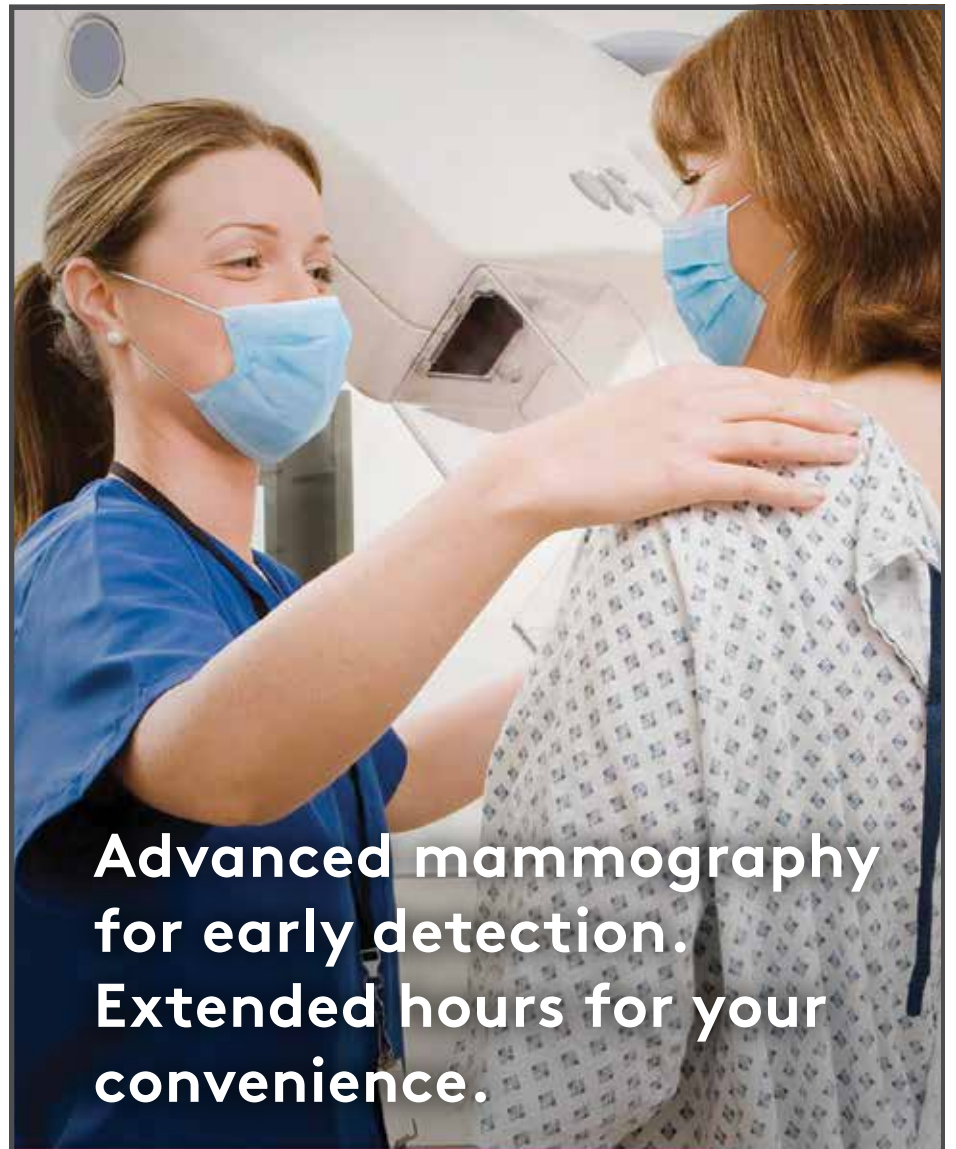
"I am hopeful about this research and the trajectory of where we are heading," he adds. "So, I think there is good reason to be hopeful and to be optimistic as well. This is 2020, and technology is getting better and better every day."

His advice to family members is valuable. "Understand you are not alone on your journey in taking care of your loved one. You can find a team to help you. And, in order to be the best for your loved one, you need to take care of yourself. The disease will change you, and it is not a positive thing to do it alone. Taking care of yourself will help you be there for others. And we all have to do it as a team."

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Neurologist and Movement Disorder Specialist John Legge, MD



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#### Parkinson's Resources

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**Rock Steady Boxing Desert Cities** (local): Offering online programs. For more information call (760) 831.1909

**Parkinson's Resource Organization** (local): A large variety of resources from health care to community. [www.parkinsonsresource.org](http://www.parkinsonsresource.org) (760) 773.5628

**National Parkinson's Foundation:** [www.parkinson.org](http://www.parkinson.org)

**Michael J. Fox Foundation:** [www.michaeljfox.org](http://www.michaeljfox.org)

**MJ Fox Finder for clinical trials:** [www.michaeljfox.org/trial-finder](http://www.michaeljfox.org/trial-finder) (Top trials on Dr. Legge's list include all the Alpha-synuclein and repurposed drug trials)



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## New Treatments for Pain Management

By Roland D. Reinhart, MD

Four new developments in pain management can be broken down into two groups: those that improve pain by physically relieving pressure on nerves, and those that modulate pain using electrical stimulation. All of these techniques are done on an outpatient basis utilizing local or twilight anesthesia and have minimal or no recovery time.

**Vertiflex device.** Physical pressure on the spinal nerves is due to three major factors, which cause narrowing around the spinal nerves: bulging discs, enlarged ligaments in the spinal canal and arthritis. When sitting, mechanical changes cause the area where nerves exit the spine to open; standing causes the area to narrow, putting more pressure on the spine. Pain when standing and walking may be relieved by sitting or bending forward, such as leaning on a shopping cart. Vertiflex is a small device that is inserted between the vertebra and caresses the spinous processes of the adjacent bones. Bending forward is not impaired, but when standing, the nerve opening is maintained as if you were sitting.

**Minimally invasive lumbar decompression (MILD).** Minimally invasive lumbar decompression (MILD) relieves pain by decompressing pressure on the nerves, due to enlarged ligaments in the spinal canal. A tiny incision (less than a paper hole punch) is made and a small tube is guided to the back of the lamina. A tiny grabbing device is passed through the tube and small pieces of the ligament are removed. Continuous X-ray guidance and small doses of iodine contrast material monitor

the progress. Removal of the part of the ligament will open up the spinal canal and relieve pressure on the nerves.

**Spinal cord stimulation.** Surgery may not be indicated for many people with pain, either because of previous surgery, and there is nothing to “fix,” or they may have medical reasons that preclude surgery. Spinal cord stimulation can alleviate pain by blocking pain signals going to the brain using electrical current applied in the epidural space; it can be thought of as a “pain pacemaker” for the spine. Prior to 2017, stimulation involved replacing pain signals with a tingling sensation. In 2017, two new stimulation waveforms were introduced - high frequency (HF10) and Burst stimulation. These new stimulation methods do not cause tingling but simply block the pain signals. Moreover, they are about 80 percent effective at relieving back pain. Before considering implantation of the device, a one-week trial period is undertaken to assess the therapy’s effectiveness.

**Dorsal root ganglion (DRG).** Dorsal root ganglion (DRG) stimulation applies a small electrical current to one to two specific nerves as they exit the spine. DRG allows for the treatment of particular areas of pain, such as the foot, knee or hip. This therapy is especially effective after knee, or hip surgery, where patients may continue to have pain despite adequate surgical repair. Foot pain from neuropathy (frequently diabetic) responds very well to DRG stimulation.

Fortunately, many exciting advances in pain management today can further alleviate suffering.

Dr. Reinhart is double board certified in pain management and can be reached at his office in Palm Desert at (760) 341.2360. For more information visit [www.reinhartmd.com](http://www.reinhartmd.com).



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## Quarantine Brain Slowing You Down?

By Simone Ravicz, PhD

Do you feel like your brain has checked out and gone on vacation while you’re stuck at home quarantining? Does your thinking seem foggy? Are you more forgetful? Having problems making decisions? Many people are complaining of a range of cognitive difficulties arising from the current situation caused by COVID-19.

People are experiencing increased stress, brain fog, anxiety, depression and difficulty with motivation during the current pandemic. Worrying about contracting or spreading the virus, as well as isolation, loneliness, job loss, financial strain, racial and political strife, and lack of routine and structure, can change our brain chemistry and our brain’s ability to function well.



Lack of motivation and brain fog are common symptoms of quarantine fatigue.

Simply put, people are stressed out. Short-term stress is central to survival as it triggers the “fight-flight-freeze” response, which motivates our behavior and protects us from perceived threats. When we’re stressed, the “fear center” of the brain, the amygdala, activates our central stress response system. After the danger has passed, the system usually returns hormone levels and functioning back to balance and the rest-digest state.

However, when you’re chronically stressed, your nervous system is turned up all the time. High levels of cortisol, the stress hormone central to the fight-flight response, have been associated with impaired memory and thinking and even brain shrinkage. Stress also leads to reduced grey matter in the areas of the brain responsible for self-control. Perhaps this is one reason you may be finding it difficult to feel motivated and stay on track with respect to work, relationships, health and the like.

Stress also influences the levels of serotonin, which can interfere with your concentration and comprehension. Over time, these changes can lead to cognitive disruptions and symptoms of anxiety, depression and general emotional distress.

Another problem with negative stress is that it interferes with the functioning of the most advanced part of your brain, the prefrontal cortex. This region controls complex cognitive functions you need daily, like attention, decision-making and planning. With the boost of adrenaline and cortisol from the amygdala’s threat warning, you also get shutdown to the neural pathways connecting to the prefrontal cortex. Instead of focusing on thinking realistically and rationally, your brain is trying to protect you from the real or imagined threat.

While the stressors we’re facing may not go away in the near future, you can make big changes in how you respond to stress to optimize your brain.

First, and very difficult for many in our society, is developing *self-compassion*. Given our culture’s emphasis on achievement and success, many push themselves mercilessly to obtain their goals. They fear that if they put down the stick used to motivate themselves, they will no longer accomplish what they need to do. This thought is untrue. Self-compassion can increase motivation and commitment to perform more so than self-criticism and punishment.

*Continued on page 9*



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# THE Paradigm Shift in Medicine Today

By Jeralyn Brossfield, MD



## Unexpected Wake Up Calls

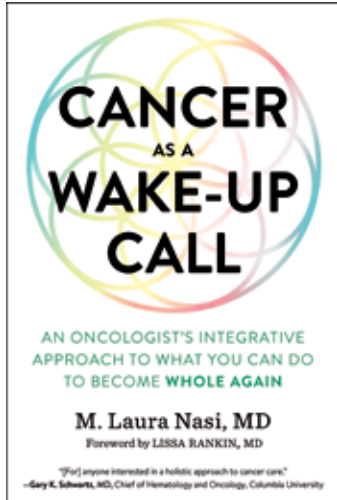
It now seems cliché to say that 2020 has brought unexpected challenges. We have all adapted to the constant of change. Personally, my biggest change was a diagnosis of bilateral breast cancer. Initially, I responded with calm analysis, keeping reality at arms-length by “doing” what needed to be done. I made a notebook, set up second opinions, read extensively, set up Zoom chats to tell family, and calculated the best days for treatment so I could still work, but below all the management and brave face, were two strong feelings - betrayal and knowing.

Anyone who has gone through cancer seems to have experienced shock that this is happening to them. As someone who teaches wellness and lives a very healthy life, it felt as though I had missed something, and this diagnosis had to have had a cause. That’s where the knowing came in. Ayurveda’s ancient teachings see cancer as originating in the soul and then expressing in the physical body. I was pretty sure that for me, the soul part of the equation was where I was out of balance.

Soon after my diagnosis, I came across Laura Nasi, MD’s book *Cancer as a Wake-Up Call*. She describes cancer as having four contributors, and this perspective helped me tease apart the impacts in my own life that created an environment that allowed this cancer to grow.

**Psychologic.** My family of origin has always focused on service. We lived in places of poverty, and the needs of others were visibly profound. I count this background as a blessing, but it also made it easy to see my only value was in serving others. It seemed wrong to have needs or prioritize myself when it meant another child might die, or someone would go without health care because I needed my parents. I trace my calling to be a physician to these years and have a clear sense of purpose for my life. What I didn’t develop well was the ability to have compassion and priority for my own needs. I’m learning how to set boundaries and how to ask for what I need. My reminder right now is a phrase, “Stop feeling guilty for doing what’s best for you.” This mindset will be a life-long process, but I believe I can do it and learn a new harmony between care for others and myself.

**Nervous system.** It took pulling away from my work to recognize that I am an “adrenaline junkie,” unaware that I am running on elevated cortisol. A few weeks after my diagnosis, after clearing my schedule of unnecessary work, I wanted to celebrate a friend’s birthday with a socially-distanced lunch. I needed to pick up a gift and time the food pick-up to meet her at noon. Everything took longer than I had allotted...and I



*Continued on page 7*

## Osteoarthritis? Get Moving!

By Luke Gentry, PT, DPT, OCS and Vince Kambe PT, DPT, OCS

Many people with osteoarthritis (OA) or “bone on bone” changes ignore exercise or minimize movement due to the myth that it will further damage their joints. They often manage their pain with medication while simply waiting to get their joint replaced.

Approximately 14 million people have symptomatic OA, however, patients do not have to live with years of knee or hip pain, and movement, mobility, and strength can help.

**Causes of osteoarthritis.** The knee and hip are the two freely moving joints most affected by OA. It is a progressive disease caused by inflammation and degeneration of joints and progression is influenced by age, body mass index (BMI), bone structure, genetics, muscular strength and activity level. Knee OA may also develop as a secondary condition following a traumatic knee injury.

As OA progresses, articular cartilage begins to soften and demonstrates a less smooth surface, while the underlying bone may increase due to extra stress as the cartilage matrix becomes disrupted. Pain occurs when the cartilage wears down. Excessive stress (increased weight/height ratio, excessive exercise without sufficient rest, etc.) contributes to early cartilage breakdown.

Symptoms include worsening pain during climbing, or moving from a standing to sitting position, and popping, cracking, or grinding when moving the knee. These symptoms do not occur suddenly but develop gradually over time.

**Non-invasive treatment options.** Depending on the stage of the disease and whether there are associated conditions or injuries, OA can be managed with physical therapy. Individuals often move in a way that is inefficient or places undue stress on their joints; a physical therapist can show you how to modify your activity to ease the stress.

During your diagnosis, a therapist will measure your range of motion, strength, mobility, and flexibility. You will perform various movements to see if they increase or decrease pain. Your physical therapist will design a whole-body, individualized treatment program specific to your condition. Range of motion exercises will focus on improving your ability to bend and straighten your knee and improve flexibility for increased motion. Activity is prescribed based on the type, frequency, duration and intensity of your condition and your program is monitored to avoid excessive stress on the impacted joint and to allot adequate time for rest and recovery.

**Prevention.** Inactivity is a significant contributor to many problems that affect OA. In fact, current research indicates that individuals with knee OA who walk more steps per day are less likely to develop functional problems in the future. Exercise to strengthen the muscles around the knee and surrounding joints is important to decrease stress to the knee joint, improve flexibility and keep the cartilage healthy.

Take a “whole body” approach to managing your OA. Lack of strength, mobility and flexibility in surrounding areas of the body such as the ankle, hip, and spine can affect degenerative joints.

Weight loss will also decrease the stress on the joint, which in turn will lessen the erosion of the protective cartilage and prolong the onset of OA.

**The conclusion?** Get moving, stay active, and remember...motion is lotion for the body and joints!

*Drs. Gentry and Kambe are orthopedic certified specialists and clinic directors for Avid Physical Therapy. They can be reached at luke@avidphysicaltherapy.com and vince@avidphysicaltherapy.com. For more information, visit www.AvidPhysicalTherapy.com.*

Sources available upon request.



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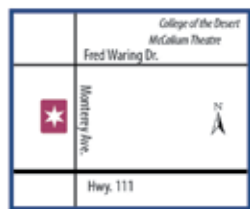
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NICHOLAS S. BAUMANN, DDS

**All I Want This Holiday is Healthy Teeth**

*Tips to take care of your smile*

By Nick Baumann, DDS

With holidays come all the fun foods and drinks we associate with the fall season. Most of us look forward to the pies, candies and other festive treats, but this doesn't give us an excuse to neglect our teeth and oral health. There are some easy things we can do to make sure we make it through the holidays with a happy, healthy smile.

**Eat**

During the holiday season, we tend to see a rise in sugar consumption. Whether it is the candy of Halloween, the sweet pies of Thanksgiving, or the sugary drinks and snacks of the December holidays, it's important to remember the effect sugars can have on our teeth. More sugar leads to more risk for cavities. We should also try to limit grazing as smaller doses of frequent sugar is more damaging to teeth than larger amounts in short duration. Also, be particularly careful with sticky sweets as they can stay on teeth much longer, causing more potential for cavities. We should also take the same care with any starchy foods as they have the same sticky ability for decay. Foods high in protein and healthy fats are much less damaging to teeth, so snacking on cheeses and meats can be a healthier choice.



Drinking water with sweets can help alleviate cavities.

**Drink**

To help limit the risk to our teeth, one of the easiest things we can do is to drink plenty of water with any sweets, and not miss any opportunities to brush our teeth. The water will help wash away the sugar in between brushing.

Alcohol consumption also goes up during the holidays. With alcohol can come dehydration, of which one of the effects can be dry mouth. Our saliva is the most important thing we have protecting our teeth against decay, so make sure to drink plenty of water with any alcohol to counteract the dehydrating effect, and always remember to brush your teeth as the last thing before you go to bed.

**...and chew carefully**

Also, more popular during the holidays are hard foods like candies and nuts. Take care when chewing on anything particularly hard so as not to damage teeth. Of course, for those walnut fans, make sure to use a nutcracker and not your teeth, and stick with the bottle opener for that beer or wine bottle.

The holiday season is welcome after such a long, hard and hot year. Let's remember these few small tips to take care of our teeth, and we can all get through the end of the year with a healthy smile as we look forward to a much better 2021.

Dr. Nick is with Palm Desert Smiles and can be reached at (760) 568.3602.



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# The Power of Liquid Biopsy in the Detection and Management of Cancer

By Bernadette M. Greenwood, BSc, PG Cert, RT (R) (MR) (ARRT) with Ben Pricer

## What is a Liquid Biopsy?

Circulating tumor cells (CTCs) were first discovered in 1869 by Thomas Ashworth in the blood of a man with metastatic cancer. He hypothesized that “cells identical with those of the cancer itself being seen in the blood may tend to throw some light upon the mode of origin of multiple tumors existing in the same person.” In other words, Mr. Ashworth discovered that as tumors grow, they can shed cells and other material that travel through the blood or lymph system and can form a new tumor in other tissues. It is then possible that these cells and other materials like tumor DNA, more commonly referred to as circulating tumor DNA (ctDNA), could be detected and used as a tool to find or monitor cancer in the body. In his very important work, Ashworth noted, “One thing is certain, that if they [CTC] came from an existing cancer structure, they must have passed through the greater part of the circulatory system.”

This discovery has proven to be one of the most important findings in the understanding of cancer biology and metastasis. It wasn't until the 1990's that the significance of circulating tumor cells in the diagnosis and monitoring of the disease was fully realized. Over 100 years later, CTCs, ctDNA, or liquid biopsy as they are called collectively, have become an important area of research and an invaluable tool in the diagnosis and management of cancer.

These simple blood tests are quickly emerging as tools physicians use in screening for the presence of disease, monitoring response to therapy, identifying the appropriate treatment, and detecting residual disease after surgery.

## A powerful discovery in cancer diagnosis and management

Much like a tissue biopsy, liquid biopsies can help tell the story of what is happening inside one's body. The power of a liquid biopsy is in its ability to help detect and monitor cancer anywhere in the body without needing a sample of the tumor or suspicious tissue. This non-invasive approach is both safer than a traditional biopsy and a more realistic means of monitoring the progression of disease compared to performing multiple invasive tissue biopsies over time.

One emerging application of CTCs in cancer management is the prediction of metastatic potential in prostate cancer. In other words, how likely the cancer is to spread to other areas of the body. At Halo Diagnostics, an advanced diagnostics company in the Coachella Valley, we use CTCs to monitor response to a very promising and emerging prostate cancer treatment option called laser focal therapy.

Unlike traditional approaches, like radical prostatectomy or radiation therapy, laser focal therapy is able to accurately target lesions or tumors in the prostate by using real-time magnetic resonance imaging and then laser energy to ablate or kill affected areas of the organ. This targeted approach is effective at not only treating the cancer but protecting vital surrounding tissues and nerves that are often damaged by traditional approaches. Damaging these neighboring structures can lead to side effects, like erectile dysfunction and urinary incontinence, often observed when a man undergoes radical whole gland surgery to treat his disease. Once the disease is treated by laser focal therapy or more traditional methods, the presence or absence of CTCs in the blood is a powerful way to monitor the success of the procedure and to help keep a close eye on possible recurrence.

Circulating tumor cells are not just for prostate cancer. The test can be helpful in the setting of non-small cell lung cancer, colorectal cancer, breast cancer, melanoma and ovarian cancer. The following is the perspective of a breast cancer survivor, *Desert Health* Publisher Lauren Del Sarto, who had liquid biopsy tests performed to monitor the presence of CTCs during her journey.

“I was intrigued to learn that the CTC test, often used as a cancer marker within the naturopathic community, was not regarded as a viable test by the medical oncology community,” she says. “The test was important to me, both physically and emotionally. With the guidance of my naturopathic doctor, my goal was to get the number down under five, and I did (number of viable tumor cells in the blood sample). The higher numbers inspired me to stick to my strict nutrition and supplementation protocol, and the lower numbers were affirmation that the treatment plan I selected was working. It was validation for me to know that my dedication to the protocol was paying off.”

Del Sarto's CTC score was zero at diagnosis, 105 at seven months, 54 at nine months and back to zero at 19 months. She has been deemed cancer free by both her medical and naturopathic doctors.

*Bernadette M. Greenwood is chief research officer at Halo Diagnostics and a clinical instructor at UC Riverside School of Medicine. For more information on liquid biopsy, visit [www.halodx.com/liquidbiopsy](http://www.halodx.com/liquidbiopsy).*

Reference: 1) Ashworth, T. R (1869). "A case of cancer in which cells similar to those in the tumours were seen in the blood after death". *Australian Medical Journal*. 14: 146-7

## Unexpected Wake Up Calls

Continued from page 5

could feel my anxiety rising. I realized suddenly that this was how I had been living most days of my life - expecting myself to do more than is reasonable in limited amounts of time. I took special notice of how my anxiety felt and made a commitment to recognize my built-in alarm system. While I know my tendency is to work like an energizer bunny, I know I'm going to have to be just as diligent at refilling my batteries and living life at a gentler pace.

**Immune and endocrine systems.** Initially, I dismissed these parts of my story because I have such a healthy lifestyle. But as I've thought more about it, I realize I have had little clues along the way that these systems were suffering the consequences of over-work and living in the “fight or flight” state of elevated cortisol. Stress has been the fuel to the fire for me, and I ignored it. My antibodies indicating reactivation of the Epstein-Barr virus, along with early menopause, had been clues to slow down. I missed the messages and kept on pushing until cancer stopped me.

Cancer has indeed been a wake-up call for me. I am going through a broad treatment approach that includes chemotherapy and surgery, along with qigong, Ayurveda, acupuncture and naturopathy. I know I will come through this with a new understanding and ways of living.

If my example can help you, please know that health is multi-dimensional, and the efforts you make now to build wellness in ALL areas of your life are worthwhile.

*Jeralyn Brossfield, MD, is the founder and physician of XO Health and medical director of Brain Treatment Center both in Rancho Mirage. She can be reached at (760) 573.2761 or [www.BrainTreatmentCenter.com](http://www.BrainTreatmentCenter.com) and on Facebook @XOHealth.*

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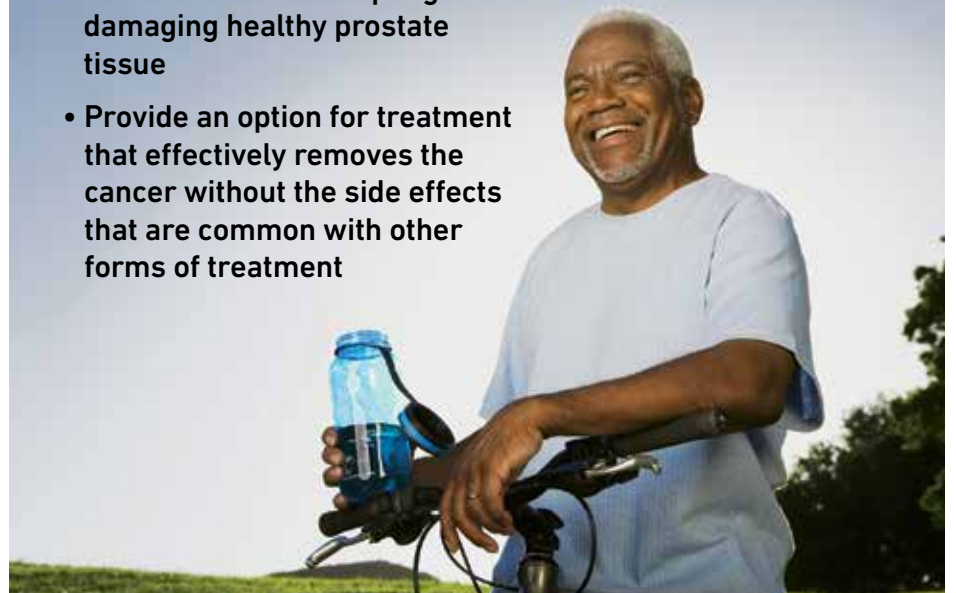
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## Coachella Valley's Health Care Industry MENTORING THE FUTURE

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### New PA Pipeline Team Launches in the Coachella Valley

The Coachella Valley is currently facing a shortage of primary health care professionals, especially those from within our community, and physician assistants are an important resource to meet that need.

OneFuture Coachella Valley (OFCV) is facilitating the launch of a new regional alignment team to address this, with a specific focus on creating awareness of the physician assistant (PA) professional pathway and associated career opportunities, and creating an educational roadmap for local students to achieve PA positions. OFCV is collaborating with local PA professionals and active PA pipeline programs in California.

PAs are medical providers who diagnose illness, develop and manage treatment plans, prescribe medications, and often serve as a patient's principal health care professional. With thousands of hours of medical training, PAs are versatile and collaborative. PAs practice in every state and every medical setting and specialty, improving health care access and the quality of health care.

A strong health care education pipeline is well established in the Coachella Valley. This PA pipeline team will build upon that foundation, which includes middle school career explorations and Junior Upcoming Medical Professionals (JUMP) after-school clubs, seven high school health academies serving 1,500 students, scholarships for college and graduate students, and summer internships for juniors and seniors in college.

Our vision is to facilitate a pathway so that students from the Coachella Valley are highly qualified for admission into California PA programs with the ultimate goal for them to return, work and serve in the Coachella Valley. We believe this pathway will provide a sustainable solution to offering local students excellent careers while addressing our region's primary care shortage and the long-term health care needs of our community because:

- Students from the region understand the Coachella Valley's cultural, economic and health care disparity landscape. Fostering their pathway into PA programs will contribute to providing high-quality, holistic, compassionate and individualized health care for local patients.
- More local students trained in the PA profession will translate into more graduates returning to our community to become part of the primary care workforce.
- Local students entering the PA profession will increase access to reliable and economical medical care in the rural areas of the Coachella Valley.

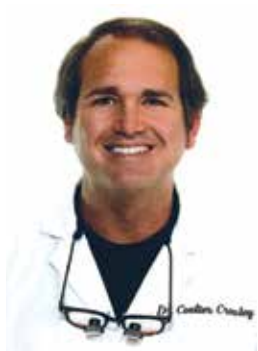
We invite the community to join us in this work. The program currently needs funding from foundations, organizations and individuals to meet all of our goals. In addition, we are looking for local PA professionals to join the team to help mentor our next generation of physician assistants.

For more information, contact Sheila Thornton with OneFuture Coachella Valley at (760) 625.0422 or visit [www.onefuturecv.org](http://www.onefuturecv.org).

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**Breast Cancer: Single Dose Radiation Option**

With continuing, medical advancement comes encouraging news for breast cancer patients. In light of new findings, women now have another option for treating breast cancer. It's called targeted intraoperative radiotherapy (TARGIT), and as the name implies, it targets the radiation to the specific site of the tumor, bypassing vital organs.

According to Dennis Holmes, MD, medical director of the breast program at Adventist Health in Glendale, this is a significant move forward for those who are diagnosed with breast cancer. "There was a time when women who were diagnosed had a mastectomy, the complete removal of the affected breast, as their only surgical option for fighting the disease."

More recently, lumpectomy, or removal of only the affected part of the breast, followed by a six-week course of daily radiotherapy to the entire breast is now also an option. In general, radiotherapy reduces the risk of recurrence of breast cancer by 60 to 70 percent, maintains Dr. Holmes. "However, it's an approach often associated with significant treatment inconvenience and side effects. For many patients, following up five days a week for six weeks of radiotherapy can be difficult. "The inconvenience and lack of compliance affect a patient's outcome. Skin-related side effects due to the radiation can also be problematic."

In trying to reduce those challenges, several radiotherapy procedures have been developed over the last two decades with the goal of decreasing the number of required radiotherapy treatments (often 25-30), to a single treatment at the time of surgery.

"TARGIT is the most innovative of these treatments, providing complete radiation at a safe, single dose, that focuses the radiation directly on the lumpectomy site—the area at greatest risk of recurrence, sparing the breast skin and nearby organs from radiation," explains Holmes, who has been looking at alternatives to traditional radiotherapy since 2002.

In 2006, he joined the international study as an investigator to enroll patients in a randomized control trial. Half the women randomly received traditional radiotherapy after surgery; the other half underwent TARGIT during lumpectomy. They were followed to determine the outcome of both methods. "Patients were followed an average of 8 to 18 years to ensure that the results were reliable and consistent," says Holmes.

The long-term results from the trial published in the *British Medical Journal* were notable. "We found that lumpectomy with TARGIT achieved the same rate of cancer control as lumpectomy followed by traditional radiotherapy, thereby establishing TARGIT as an effective alternative to traditional radiation. The study also demonstrated that the women who underwent TARGIT had fewer death-related heart attacks and lung cancer than those treated with conventional radiation.

The major advantage of TARGIT, says Holmes is, "Patients leave the operating room with lumpectomy and breast radiotherapy completed in a single visit allowing them to resume home and work activities much more quickly without compromising cancer control or cancer survival."

Janet Zappala is a certified nutritional consultant, an Emmy-award-winning anchor/reporter and the creator and host of *Your Health Matters*. Find her on Facebook @JanetZappalaYourHealthMatters. For more information on TARGIT, call (800) 203.5515 or visit [www.DrHolmesMD.com](http://www.DrHolmesMD.com).

**Quarantine Brain Slowing You Down?**

Continued from page 4

To become more self-compassionate, before judging yourself harshly for something you've done, imagine a friend did it. How would you talk to your friend? How would you treat this person? Many of us are much kinder to others than ourselves. Self-compassion is a powerful stress reducer, allowing for more organized and rational thinking and better behavioral choices.<sup>1</sup>

Second, monitor your "stinking thinking" to reduce stress. Watch out for negative self-talk, which often becomes self-fulfilling. If you're feeling stressed and your inner voice starts, "I can't believe everything that is happening. I am so stressed out. I'm so sick of this. I can't stand it," you are going to make yourself feel even worse. Making a few changes to your self-talk can help you feel more hopeful and open: "So much is going on now. All of this change is making me feel stressed. If I just deal with it one day at a time, I can get through it." Use your thinking to help reduce your brain's stress.

Mindfulness can reduce stress and offers a variety of brain benefits. It is based on taking a different approach to discomfort than you would usually. It involves noticing and nonjudgmentally accepting what is happening inside your body and around you. Mindfulness is present-focused and involves turning toward your emotions, thoughts and physical sensations - even when painful - rather than the typical response of trying to ignore or get rid of the pain. For example, if you were angry, you could attend to the emotion, the physical sensations of anger (tight muscles, clenched fist) and angry thoughts. By nonjudgmentally noticing and allowing them, these elements lessen and pass. Remember, acceptance of the painful thoughts, feelings and emotions does not mean you like them; it just means you are willing to allow them to be present so they can pass on. Mindfulness is associated with reduced activity and less gray matter in the stress-related amygdala. This focus helps your brain work effectively and efficiently and reduces the arousal from stress, anxiety or fear.

Adapting to the uncertainty of the present can be difficult. To boost your brain, pay attention to your cognitive, emotional and physical needs and take steps to renew your energy and feel more in control.

Sleep is an essential process during which waste and toxins are cleared from the brain. You can probably think of a time you were sleep-deprived and had difficulty thinking rationally and healthfully. Not getting enough sleep is also detrimental as, over time, it leads to the production of more stress hormones and greater brain interference.

We all know the importance of exercise for physical and emotional health. However, it's also central to our cognitive abilities. The endorphins secreted can improve your thinking and concentration - and mood - and regular aerobic exercise can help maintain brain size and function as you age.

The key is to take good care of yourself. Make sure you're eating nutritious meals, socializing, doing hobbies, enjoying nature, engaging in self-care, watching comedies and being kind and patient with yourself. And remember, if you're experiencing significant emotional distress or cognitive impairment that interferes with your functioning, don't be afraid to reach out for the support you may need.

Dr. Ravicz is a licensed clinical psychologist in Palm Springs and can be reached at (760) 904.7957. For more information, visit [www.drsimonepsychologist.com](http://www.drsimonepsychologist.com).

Reference: 1) Breines, J.G. and Chen, S. "Self-compassion increases self-improvement motivation". NIH, PubMed.gov, 2012 Sep;38(9):1133-43.)

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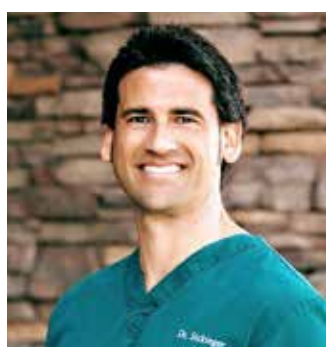
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## The Power of PRP as a Non-surgical Treatment

By Eric Sickinger, DO and Thalie Timsit, BS

Sports fans across the nation have platelet-rich plasma (PRP) to thank for helping some of their favorite athletes get back on the field after an injury. Earlier this year, when Los Angeles Angels pitcher Griffin Canning suffered an ulnar collateral ligament (UCL) injury in his pitching elbow, he elected to pursue treatment with PRP. Several months after the procedure, Canning shared, “It just feels like normal, honestly, like my elbow has felt in the past when I haven’t had any issues with it.” Canning is just one of many who have sought a non-surgical approach to relieve their pain. While many athletes pursue this treatment, PRP is also an excellent option for anyone at any age, searching for a non-invasive way to reduce pain and improve function.

Platelet-rich plasma is exactly what it sounds like - blood plasma that has a high concentration of platelets. While blood naturally has many platelets, PRP involves increasing the concentration by at least double, often more. This procedure involves drawing the patient’s blood and spinning it in a centrifuge to separate the whole blood into layers so the PRP can be identified and isolated. The process yields plasma that is highly saturated with platelets. The plasma is then injected directly into the affected area. The entire process, from blood draw to injection, takes roughly an hour.

Platelets are tiny cell fragments in the blood that, when activated, release beneficial proteins called growth factors. These growth factors improve cell signaling, blood clotting and overall tissue regeneration and healing. During the PRP procedure, platelets can release growth factors and improve the environment of the injured area. The PRP treatment exploits the therapeutic properties of platelets and specifically directs them into the area to stimulate a healing response.

PRP is an excellent choice for treating various musculoskeletal injuries, including arthritis, tennis or golfer’s elbow and Achilles tendonitis, to name a few. A notable study demonstrated the objective healing properties of PRP. Published in January 2020, the study researched PRP’s effects on both knees from 23 women with osteoarthritis by observing MRIs before and eight months after treatment. There was a significant improvement in the knee cartilage volume and decreased inflammation of the joint membrane with PRP.<sup>1</sup> Clinical research has also shown positive outcomes based on patients’ reports of pain level. A 2016 study used a variety of scales to measure pain level and quality of life. Patients who had PRP treatment reported improvement on all scales.<sup>2</sup>

PRP is a relatively safe, low-risk treatment option as the blood comes directly from the patient. This autologous process eliminates the possibility of an immune or allergic reaction since nothing is foreign for the body to attack or reject. It also eliminates the possibility of disease transmissions, such as HIV or hepatitis.

PRP is still an emerging treatment option. However, many promising studies show its objective and subjective benefits. The manipulation of platelets’ healing properties can have a favorable impact on alleviating pain and restoring a patient’s quality of life - athlete or not.

Founding physician Eric Sickinger, DO and medical assistant Thalie Timsit, BS are with Advanced Center for Sports & Musculoskeletal Medicine. For more information, contact their Palm Desert office at (760) 636.1067 or the San Clemente office at (949) 388.1060, or visit [www.SportsandMSKmedicine.com](http://www.SportsandMSKmedicine.com).

References: 1) Raeissadat SA, Ghorbani E, Sanei Taheri M, et al. MRI Changes After Platelet Rich Plasma Injection in Knee Osteoarthritis (Randomized Clinical Trial). J Pain Res. 2020;13:65-73. Published 2020 Jan 10. doi:10.2147/JPR.S204788; 2) Montañez-Heredia, Elvira, et al. “Intra-Articular Injections of Platelet-Rich Plasma versus Hyaluronic Acid in the Treatment of Osteoarthritic Knee Pain: A Randomized Clinical Trial in the Context of the Spanish National Health Care System.” International Journal of Molecular Sciences, vol. 17, no. 7, 2016, p. 1064., doi:10.3390/ijms17071064.

## Childbearing in the Time of COVID-19

By Lara Hasan, MD

I deeply feel for my pregnant patients right now. I really do. What is supposed to be a time of joy, hope, and excitement has, for the most part, become a time of stress, anxiety and uncertainty. An event that usually brings families together has, unfortunately morphed into a solitary journey of isolation. While the course of COVID-19 is still information we are trying to understand, it is important to reach out and support those going through big life changes the best we can.

Research into how COVID-19 affects pregnancy is still underway, and we still have many unanswered questions. The same recommendations that apply to the general public apply to pregnant women, including physical distancing, masking when close to others and frequent hand washing. Within our practice, we are recommending pregnant patients limit contact with people outside their households, particularly within the last month of pregnancy. We recommend testing for COVID-19 during pregnancy since one of the risks associated with COVID-19 is an increased risk of blood clots, a risk that is already increased in pregnancy. Since pregnant women tend to be young and healthy for the most part, they thankfully tend to have shorter hospital stays than other patients with COVID-19 who have increased risk factors if they do end up requiring admission.

Whether the COVID-19 course itself is worse in pregnant women than non-pregnant women is still debatable. However, some studies have shown that pregnant women with COVID-19 are more likely to experience certain complications, such as being admitted to the ICU or experiencing preterm labor. Fortunately, it appears that transmission of the virus to the fetus is low, although this does become more of a concern with an active infection at the time of delivery.

The overarching consequence of all of this uncertainty is the mental toll that this pandemic is taking on my patients and their families. I am seeing increased rates of anxiety and depression. Women have had to miss out on the joyous experiences associated with pregnancy, such as gender reveals and baby showers. Hospitals are generally limiting patients to one support person in labor, meaning grandparents, siblings and other significant loved ones have to be excluded from these momentous occasions.

I am sharing this in the hopes that those of you with pregnant loved ones in your lives can reach out to help open this circle of isolation. Check in with the pregnant women you know to find out how they are doing. See if you can safely offer help to them, such as having food delivered or running errands on their behalf. While COVID-19 has fundamentally altered the way we live our lives, let us continue to watch out for and care for each other, even if it is in new unorthodox ways. This journey does not have to be an isolating one. We just have to become creative about how we can get involved.

Dr. Lara Hasan is a board-certified obstetrician/gynecologist with Advanced Women’s Healthcare. She takes care of and supports women across the age spectrum and is a proud member of the Desert Doctors Network. (760) 327.7900 [www.DesertDoctors.org](http://www.DesertDoctors.org).





## Silver Linings of COVID-19

By Shari Jainuddin, NMD, BCB

There comes a point in chaos where finding the silver lining becomes key to coping with it all. This positive focus helps us move forward while continuously facing a multitude of uncertainties. As a doctor specializing in naturopathic medicine with a research background, there have been many silver linings for me. One silver lining is that health and health care have become front and center topics for discussion - from the direct threat of COVID-19 to exploring the limitations of our health care system, from the pursuit of possible treatments to the scrutiny of how they become available, from the ins and outs of managing our personal health care to taking care of loved ones.

To provide some reference, fresh air, clean water, whole food, sunlight, community, spirituality (self-defined), sleep, and movement are the foundations of health in naturopathic medicine. (I would also add safety to the list). We address these foundations when considering illness. These essential aspects only make sense; humans evolved with these elements integrated into their existence. Only recently have we adopted a lifestyle and created an environment that makes them less accessible. How can an organism (such as humans) expect to flourish in an environment that does not provide what it needs or has evolved to utilize? These changes have caused an exponential growth in the chronic illnesses of our day and have now been compounded by the additional changes resulting from this current virus.



Open-air treatment of 1918 influenza patients at Brookline, MA (Source: National Archives and Records Administration)

Naturopathic medicine is not new; its official formation dates back to the 1800s. These principles have been passed down from predecessors of previous centuries who found benefits of therapies including, but not limited to, air, sun, water, diet, exercise (i.e., foundations of health). What is new is that conventional medicine is now more readily endorsing its principles. This was not always the case.

In 1848, the Swiss naturopathic doctor Arnold Rikli (1823-1906) established the first institution dedicated to the healing power of atmospheric exposure in treating tuberculosis. Later, during the Spanish Flu of 1918, the patients who were given "open-air" treatments observed a better recovery.<sup>1</sup> Nearly 73 years after Rikli's institution was formed, physicians at Beth Israel Hospital were credited for discovering the healing power of the sun in treating conditions such as tuberculosis.<sup>2</sup> More recently, there has been abundant research supporting the importance of vitamin D, a vitamin activated by sun exposure, on many functions, including the immune system and mood.

While research and medical advancements are necessary, I do not think such validation precludes the importance of the foundations of health. With COVID-19, many of these foundations have regained the appreciation they deserve. The official recognition of the mechanisms underlying the foundations of health increases the health awareness of our country. The fact that these important topics are getting the attention owed

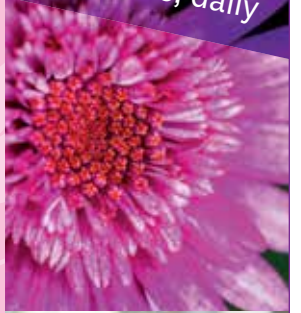
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# An Important Year to Prevent the Flu

## Natural remedies to keep healthy and heal

By Jessica Needle, ND

The upcoming flu season is causing concern for many people, compounding their worries about contracting coronavirus. Fortunately, the same behaviors that prevent transmission of COVID-19 - avoiding in-person gatherings, physical distancing when in public and wearing face masks - also protect you from the flu.

**Flu statistics and projections.** The flu affects 3-10 percent of the population each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Flu viruses circulate year-round, but the peak incidence for infection is December through February. In the Southern Hemisphere, where seasons are reversed, the flu peaks in August, giving us an idea of what to expect this fall and winter. There is good news from the World Health Organization (WHO), which reports a lower than expected incidence in 57 countries in the Southern Hemisphere this year.<sup>1</sup>

**Flu prevention.** Since prevention is the best medicine, here are some remedies you can use to stave off the flu.

- **Alliin** is a garlic extract which has anti-microbial properties. Take one capsule daily.
- **Muco coccinum** is a homeopathic preparation, meaning it contains very dilute doses of substances that work to inoculate you against the flu. One tablet weekly is all you need.
- **Colostrum** is a powder that contains antibodies, the proteins your body needs to fight infection and is also helpful for digestive problems. One teaspoon daily is a good preventative. Colostrum is derived from an animal source, so avoid this product if you follow a vegan lifestyle.

In addition to taking supplements, be sure to incorporate good health and hygiene protocols. Get enough rest; 7-8 hours of sleep per night is recommended for most people. Your body produces and releases cytokines while you sleep. These are molecules the immune system uses to communicate with cells and coordinate its response to illness. If you are sleep deprived, the production of cytokines may decrease. Exercise moderately and consistently. Exercise has a positive effect on the production and circulation of white blood cells, which fight infection in the body. Avoid alcohol, as excessive consumption has been linked to increased susceptibility to pneumonia and other respiratory distress syndromes.<sup>2</sup>

**Flu treatment.** If, despite your best efforts, you come down with the flu, here are some natural medicines that can help reduce symptoms.

- **Vitamin C** - Take 1 gram of vitamin C every six hours at the onset of illness. Liposomal vitamin C contains the active ingredient inside a capsule that is easy to absorb and reduces the chance of loose stools.
- **Lauricidin** - Take 3 grams daily with food as soon as symptoms start. Lauricidin is a powder derived from coconut that contains lauric acid, the same compound found in breast milk that confers immunity from mother to baby.
- **N-acetyl cysteine (NAC)** - Take 500 mg twice per day. NAC is an amino acid that inhibits virus replication, lowers inflammation and reduces mucus.<sup>3</sup>

Keep in mind that it is impossible to differentiate the flu from COVID-19 based on symptoms. Both can cause fever, fatigue, runny nose, cough and shortness of breath. If you begin to feel even mildly sick, isolate yourself and get tested as soon as possible.

*Dr. Needle is a licensed naturopathic doctor with Optimal Health Center in Palm Desert and can be reached at (760) 568.2598.*

References: 1) [https://www.who.int/influenza/surveillance\\_monitoring/updates/latest\\_update\\_GIP\\_surveillance/en/](https://www.who.int/influenza/surveillance_monitoring/updates/latest_update_GIP_surveillance/en/); 2) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4590612/>; 3) <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19732754/>





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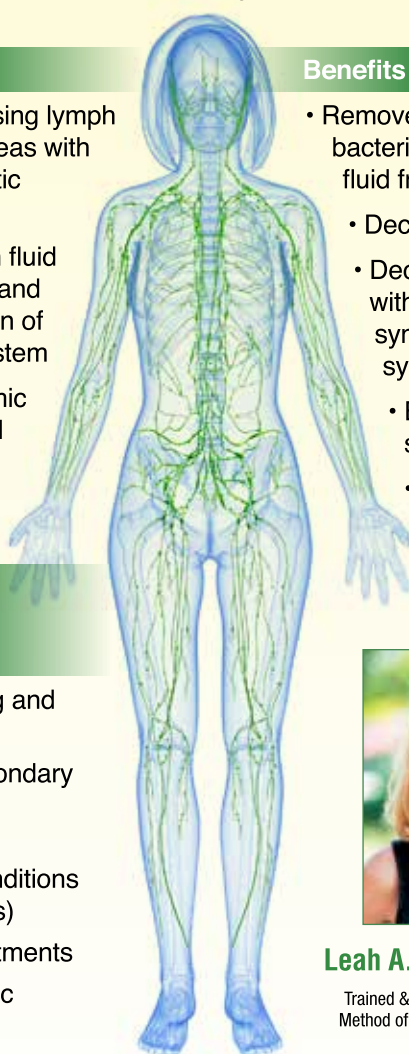
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## Healthy Hints for the Holidays: 2020

By Amy Patel, ND

This holiday season is a great time to experience much-needed light, laughter and celebration amidst the craziness of 2020. However, this excitement can also bring stress, especially in these uncertain times. Here are a few tips to help combat feelings of anxiety to have the productive and positive holiday season we all deserve.

**Harness the holiday cheer.** While it is common to eat, drink and be merry during these months, it may be beneficial to limit alcohol use this year. Online alcohol sales have increased exponentially compared to last year. What used to be a social custom is now helping many people cope with stress and isolation. Alcohol acts as a depressant to the nervous system, disrupting the balance of excitatory and inhibitory neurotransmitters which affect neurological, cardiovascular and gastrointestinal function. While it may provide a temporary calm, it can increase anxiety and depression, weaken your immune system, increase the duration of illness, increase the risk of pneumonia and acute respiratory distress syndrome and worsen sleep quality. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans states that one drink for women and two drinks for men per day is considered moderate drinking; less than that would be considered light drinking. Limiting alcohol intake for your health this year may be the best way to go.

**Spread out the family gatherings.** With more virtual celebrations happening this year, instead of one gathering with your family, celebrate for a couple of weekends to get more quality time together. Set a time to meet weekly to talk to your loved ones. Schedule virtual gift exchanges, ugly sweater parties, play charades or even cook together; the possibilities are endless. We are lucky to be in a time with advancements in technology that allow us to connect while being safe.

**Be mindful.** Everyone has heard of mindfulness, and I will be the first to say that it is easier said than done. However, there is no substitute for it. Before the pandemic, when your time was filled with busy tasks and social gatherings, it was easier to ignore the need for mindfulness. During this holiday season, being mindful will be a great way to find joy. Become more mindful in your thoughts and words and try to be in the present moment. It is always harder to go inward than to observe the bustle of everything around us, but this year, use that to your advantage.

**Support your stress soldiers.** Lastly, support the small but mighty adrenal glands, which secrete hormones that allow our bodies to respond to stress. When we are constantly stressed, these little warriors get tired and can give out. Ways to support your adrenal glands include nutritional medicines, herbs, and you guessed it, mindfulness. Water-soluble vitamins like B and C also help to support adrenal function. You can find these vitamins in whole foods or in higher doses through supplementation. Herbs that support our body's ability to adapt to stress include passionflower, chamomile, tulsi and licorice root. These adaptogens can be taken as an extract or made at home as a tea. Talk to your doctor to find the best adrenal support individualized for you.

Put your health first, and have a happy and healthy holiday season!

*Dr. Patel is a primary care naturopathic doctor and resident at Live Well Clinic in La Quinta. She can be reached at (760) 771.5970 or www.LiveWellClinic.org.*

Sources: 1) <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-effects-health/alcohol-effects-body>; 2) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html>; 3) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/stress-coping/alcohol-use.html>; 4) Health risks and benefits of alcohol consumption. Alcohol Res Health. 2000;24(1):5-11.; 5) Pollard MS, Tucker JS, Green HD Jr. Changes in Adult Alcohol Use and Consequences During the COVID-19 Pandemic in the US. JAMA Netw Open. 2020;3(9):e2022942. Published 2020 Sep 1. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.22942; 6) Sarkar D, Jung MK, Wang HJ. Alcohol and the Immune System. Alcohol Res. 2015;37(2):153-155.





## Healing Through Chakra Balancing

By Diane Sheppard, PhD, LAc

This year has taken a toll on us all. Many feel out of balance, and anxiety, stress, fear and depression are on the rise. Amidst the chaos, more people than ever are turning to meditation, yoga and other calming practices to help restore balance while adding peace and tranquility to their day.

When considering self-care options, it's important to remember your chakras, the energy centers that run along your spine from the base of your tailbone to the crown of your head. To function at their best, these important vessels need to stay open as blockages can create physical and emotional symptoms that can make you feel misaligned.

When some hear the word chakra, they think of new age nonsense, but the concept of these energy vortexes dates back thousands of years in Hinduism and Tibetan Buddhism, and science supports their claims.

**What are chakras?** Chakra is a Sanskrit word meaning "wheel." We have seven main chakras (many more exist), and each ties to specific organs and glands, has measurable vibrational frequencies and is related to specific colors. How many colors in a rainbow? Seven, just as there are seven chakras. That is no coincidence.

Our seven chakras are located on the top of the head, in the center of the forehead, in your throat, your heart, just below your chest bone, below the navel and at the base of your spine. More detail on each of these to come...

**What do they do?** When your car engine is working in harmony, the car runs smoothly. This is because energy is flowing through the engine. Our bodies and minds are the same. Our energy centers also have "minds" of their own, and when in harmony, we are emotionally and spiritually balanced.

Think about this. Physically, if you feel hungry, your body sends a signal to

the brain via neurotransmitters that it is time to eat. Emotionally, if you have a "gut feeling" about something, messages are also sent to your brain via an axis in your gut. That axis is your second chakra (located below the navel), which corresponds to your lower GI tract.

**Correlation to color and sound.** Stick with me here as this is fascinating stuff you may remember from science or music class...

Sound and light share the fundamental nature of vibration. And, even though the sounds we can hear have a much lower frequency than light that is visible to us, there is a range of sound frequencies that have corresponding consonant colors. 1

Your chakra energy centers vibrate at frequencies and are measured in hertz (Hz). In science theory, it is called the light-sound bridge. This premise is the basis for how the chakra color scale was created.

So, let's connect the dots. Below are the seven chakra centers (starting with the first) and their corresponding color, organs, tissues and vibration.

**Root chakra.** (red/magenta) Located at the base of the spine (the perineum), this chakra corresponds to the colon, skeleton bones and kidneys and vibrates to the key of C 396 Hz (think drumming). This energy force has one opening and can be challenging. It is where the kundalini (the "coiled serpent") starts its climb up the energy centers. Your root chakra regulates the sympathetic nervous system (fight or flight) and when out of balance, can evoke fear or protectiveness.

**Sacral chakra.** (orange) Located below the navel, this chakra correlates to the lower GI tract, ovaries, testicles and sexual glands. It vibrates to the key of D 417 hz (Latin dance music) and affects romantic desires. When blocked, guilt and obsessiveness may prevail.

**Solar plexus.** (yellow) Located where

*Continued on page 23*

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## Overcoming Fear During Times of Change

By Dipika Patel

There comes a pivotal time for each of us, where our life changes. No one is immune to change, especially by unforeseen circumstances. Sometimes it may feel the change is for the better; other times, it may feel like we have lost total control.

I have been through several impactful changes in my life. I lost the ability to walk for four months before I even turned 20. I dealt with a fire within my family home and lost everything I owned. I suffered abuse in different forms, as well as family separation, divorce, job loss, losing a home, immigrating to another country without my family and friends and the list goes on.

Throughout all these transitions, it was interesting to observe my internal dialogue. I became aware of my governing thoughts - the fear of moving forward, the fear of not having the support, the fear of losing control, the fear of being misunderstood and criticized. I see this coming full circle again amidst this current pandemic.

With high anxiety, fear and radicalism in the air, many people are worried about the future of our nation, and the world. We have come to this place of uncertainty within our collective society; it impacts all generations, all ethnic groups, all ages and all people. The best thing we can do is take a good look at ourselves and ask, 'how can I make a difference? No matter the opinions of others, am I willing to respect others the way I desire to be respected?' If we don't start there, where else can we look to gain some sanity?

Whatever the immediate future holds, let's choose to look at ourselves and promise to be kinder and to show gratitude and support to others as we all have our own struggles.

Overcoming fear takes a village. It requires each of us to see that peace is in our own hands, kindness in our actions. Acceptance is our response; we cannot control others. With this basic understanding, we will have less fear, more connection, support, and constructive action.

**Top five ways to overcome the fear of uncertainty:**

- **Don't wait for the (\*&^#) to hit the fan.** Be aware, be conscious and be at peace about future outcomes. Some things are in our hands while others are not, and that is ok.
- **Stop watching the news and social media.** Give yourself a break. You do not have to watch every single second of the news or scroll of your news feed.
- **Practice gratitude.** Be grateful even for the things you are not happy about, for they can teach you. Without gratitude, there is no future.
- **Be proactive.** Start working on yourself and do what you can to make your life better. Have faith that whatever happens is for the highest good.
- **Don't be alone during these times.** Connect with loved ones, be a part of your community, support others and put aside your differences.

Like Aristotle once said, "He who has overcome his fears will truly be free." Free yourself and free the world around you; it starts with you.

Dipika Patel is a certified holistic health coach and lifestyle practitioner who empowers her professional clients to activate an overall balanced lifestyle of mind, body and soul. Her inaugural book, *Own Your Inner Bitch So She Can't Own You*, is coming soon. Dipika can be reached at (760) 821.3119 or [www.LoveYourLifeHealthy.com](http://www.LoveYourLifeHealthy.com).



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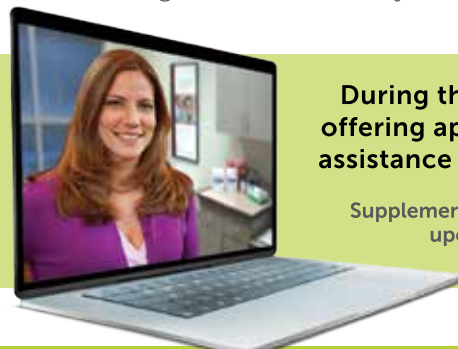
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With the upcoming gift-giving season, we can remember that longevity is a gift we can give ourselves every day, not just for the holidays. We all have a genetic blueprint in our DNA, which indicates whether we might have a tendency for chronic diseases like diabetes, hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, fibromyalgia, dementia and arthritis.

The thing about it, though, is that just because it is in your DNA does not mean it is your future. Epigenetics, the study of genes, involves two important terms - genotype and phenotype. Very simplistic definitions of genotype and phenotype are what is in your genetics and what is actually present. So, for example, say you did genetic testing, and it shows you have the genotype for diabetes that puts you at risk for diabetes. Still, you do not have the phenotype for diabetes because your labs and testing do not indicate you have diabetes. In a nutshell, this is the concept of epigenetics: that there is more to developing disease than having a gene. There are certain environmental factors that can turn on and turn off genes resulting in a phenotype that either matches your genotype or does not.

This is powerful information. As I tell my patients, just because it runs in your family does not mean you will get a particular disease. To counter genetic tendencies, you can create a lifestyle to help keep those genes from turning on and becoming your phenotype. Not everyone wants to or can do genetic testing, but for many of these diseases, the interventions that make the significant effects are similar. Here are a few things you can do to keep your chronic disease genes turned off:

- Get 7-9 hours of good, quality, uninterrupted sleep a night
- Eat a whole-foods, mainly plant-based diet
- Get a minimum of 5 minutes of high-intensity exercise three times a week
- Reduce sedentary activities
- Walk after meals
- Do a minimum 12-hour fast daily
- Make sure you are getting adequate Omega 3s in your diet
- Eat plenty of greens (aim for 10-12 cups a day)
- Take sugar out of your diet
- Take alcohol out of your diet
- Socialize (responsibly) and laugh daily
- Have your meals with other people

So, for the person who has everything - and everyone else on your list - feel free to give them a beautifully wrapped copy of this article.

Wishing you all a happy and safe holiday season.

Dr. Fayssoux is an integrative primary care practitioner with Ohm & Oot Wellness Medicine in Rancho Mirage and can be reached at (760) 469.9900. For more information, visit [www.KinderfayssouxMD.com](http://www.KinderfayssouxMD.com).

### Do Less

By Jayne Robertson, C-IAYT, E-RYT 500

It is said that you need to see or hear something three times before it fully lands. If that's the case, I have now heard the call to "Do Less" on three separate occasions. The first was in 2006, when someone said to me that I seemed to have only one speed...full throttle, 110 percent. They asked what it would be like if I went at 70 percent, and I looked at him as though he was speaking Icelandic.

The second alarm came a couple of years ago when my Epstein-Barr virus re-activated. I simply wasn't recovering from my exercise regime. So, I did "do less" and interpreted this as meaning I was truly listening to the feedback my body had to offer and made a change.

The third sign happened during my summer hiatus. I've had a chronic back issue, and the pain began to dial-up in December 2019. Yet, I pushed through the season of teaching, shifting onto Zoom with the onslaught of COVID-19, and had my back re-assessed in July. The feedback from that? Do less.

Rats...I'm not very good at doing less.

So, when I heard that message of "do less" a third time, translating to backing away from the more physical aspects of my life, it provoked anxiety. I'm lousy at doing less and feeling that by doing so, I'll disappoint others. What if I'm not giving it "my all"? What if I say "no" to some things that I've always done and have become expected of me? What if I can't work in the way I know how? What if this back pain gets worse and disabling? It was a rough couple of weeks when the "do less" message began to land fully.

Now over a couple of months, things shifted from the "what if/can't

do" narrative to "what if I did things differently?" What if I focused on me and what I need right now? What if I got creative and figured out a different pathway to teaching? I began to envision a plan of action. Change how much you do physically and dedicate yourself to creating more stability in your spine. Learn and consult with trusted experts. I realized I could do less of what's no longer serving me which, in turn, creates spaciousness for what does.

Part of interrupting the busy-ness pattern is offering myself grace to create more space. The past seven months have



Reassessing your limits and creating new boundaries can help alleviate overload.

not only been rife with change and loss, but that loss has a term - "ambiguous loss," as coined by educator / author Tara Haelle. For many of us, stressful times have meant losing motivation, thus relying on our surge capacity. Focused, ambitious, and motivated people have had feelings

resembling depression as an ambiguous loss is something we can't quite put our finger on, and we don't have an endpoint in sight. Without that, a resolution doesn't exist.

I'm trying to be okay with doing less, not repeating old patterns but finding grace in saying "no" to what overloads me and "yes" to what nourishes me. And it isn't easy. No change is easy. It takes grit and discipline and courage. I think I have some of that, so now is the time to call upon it.

Jayne Robertson is owner and instructor at Desert Yoga Therapy in Rancho Mirage. For more information, visit [www.desertyogatherapy.com](http://www.desertyogatherapy.com), call (760) 456.5160 or email [jayne@desertyogatherapy.com](mailto:jayne@desertyogatherapy.com).

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# 11 Ways to Beat the Holiday Blues

By Roger Moore, CHT

Since Labor Day, inflatable Santas have been pestering us, signaling that the holidays are rapidly approaching. Trees, lights and decorations have been rushing the season back into summer. But now, it really is time to focus on them.

For some, the holidays are a joyful and magical time of year. We decorate our homes, celebrate with family and friends, enjoy seasonal foods, wear ugly sweaters, honor our spiritual beliefs, find gifts under the tree and dance in the New Year.

For others, the holidays are a time of significant stress. They represent bad memories, loneliness and the darkness of winter, which for some is compounded by seasonal affective disorder (SAD) and just plain holiday blues.

No matter how you view the holidays, this year we'll all be trying to navigate our way through the realities of COVID-19 and the post-election stress we're sure to experience after this chaotic election season. That's a recipe for unhappiness you don't want to make, which is why we all need to take extra special care this year.

Here are 11 ways you can navigate the 2020 holidays with a smile:

- 🎁 **Exercise.** There's no better antidepressant than cardio activity. If you can, move your body - go outside for a walk, dance indoors, use a treadmill, or walk laps inside your home. If you have limited mobility, do leg lifts, stand up and sit down, move your arms, or any other activity you can do. Just don't become a bump on a Yule log.
- 🎁 **Drink plenty of water.** Keep your body hydrated to flush out toxins and other holiday blahs. Being even slightly dehydrated can cause moodiness, problems concentrating, headaches and fatigue - nothing jolly about that.
- 🎁 **Get plenty of sleep.** With or without visions of sugarplums.
- 🎁 **Eat the good-for-you stuff.** Green leafy vegetables, as well as red, blue and purple fruits and vegetables can all help heal and cleanse your body. No, fruitcake doesn't count.
- 🎁 **Minimize fats, salts and sugars.** Yes, many of the seasonal foods we grew up with are filled with unhealthy ingredients, but particularly this year, limit these treats to your holiday meals, and keep your serving size small. I challenge you this Thanksgiving to keep your dinner portions to no more than two cups of food. Yes, including pumpkin pie. And remember that Thanksgiving is one meal. Enjoy the goodies at your tribal feast, but not for breakfast, lunch and dinner over the next three days.
- 🎁 **Avoid alcohol.** If you drink, savor it slowly, and then have two 12-ounce glasses of water before your second drink. If you then want a third drink, have two more 12-ounce glasses of water first. Better yet, just drink the water. Many of the not-so-merry memories some of us have were likely fueled by alcohol. Experiment with sparkling punches or mulled cider instead (by the way, self-hypnosis is the perfect tool for managing the not-so-merry memories).
- 🎁 **Celebrate some new holiday traditions.** Since this year will likely be so different, why not research traditions of other cultures, or create your own?
- 🎁 **Manage your budget.** You don't have to spend a fortune on impersonal retail gift cards. Consider creating gifts like a jar of jam, some artwork or knitting a scarf. A festive Zoom call might be far more appreciated than accumulating more stuff. Don't forget your reindeer ears.
- 🎁 **Create fun and laughter.** If you live in the north, go out and make snow angels; those of us in the desert can make sand angels. Surefire laughter starters are watching classic comedies or doing Laughter Yoga on YouTube. Really? You haven't seen it? Go. Now. Giggle.
- 🎁 **Gather together - apart.** Find ways to enjoy your loved ones even when you have to social distance. Make frequent phone calls - not texts - actual it's-nice-to-hear-your-voice phone calls. Try family Zoom meals, food fights optional. You could even play Monopoly or other games with your grandchildren via Zoom - for extra fun, make up some new rules. Land in jail? You have to sing a carol.
- 🎁 **Perhaps most important.** Pray, meditate, or use self-hypnosis and other mindfulness-based ways of feeling spiritually connected and managing your stress.

Though the pandemic has changed so much this year, it doesn't need to change the authentic spirit of our holiday celebrations. So please, be safe and be healthy. And remember, you do have a choice: the holidays can be dark and dismal, or you can choose to light the world from within and share your joy and love.

Roger Moore is a certified counselor and registered hypnotherapist with Palm Desert Hypnosis and can be reached at [Roger@HypnosisHealthInfo.com](mailto:Roger@HypnosisHealthInfo.com) or (760) 219.8079. For more information, visit [www.hypnosishealthinfo.com/medical-hypnosis](http://www.hypnosishealthinfo.com/medical-hypnosis).

## Silver Linings of COVID-19

Continued from page 11

brings joy to my soul and has been a silver lining for me. When I hear people and the media talking about mental health, ways to address anxiety and depression, creative approaches to incorporating movement into home life, or the importance of eating healthy and getting adequate sleep, I say to myself, "It's about time!" These are all activities that support not only a healthy immune system but also overall health.

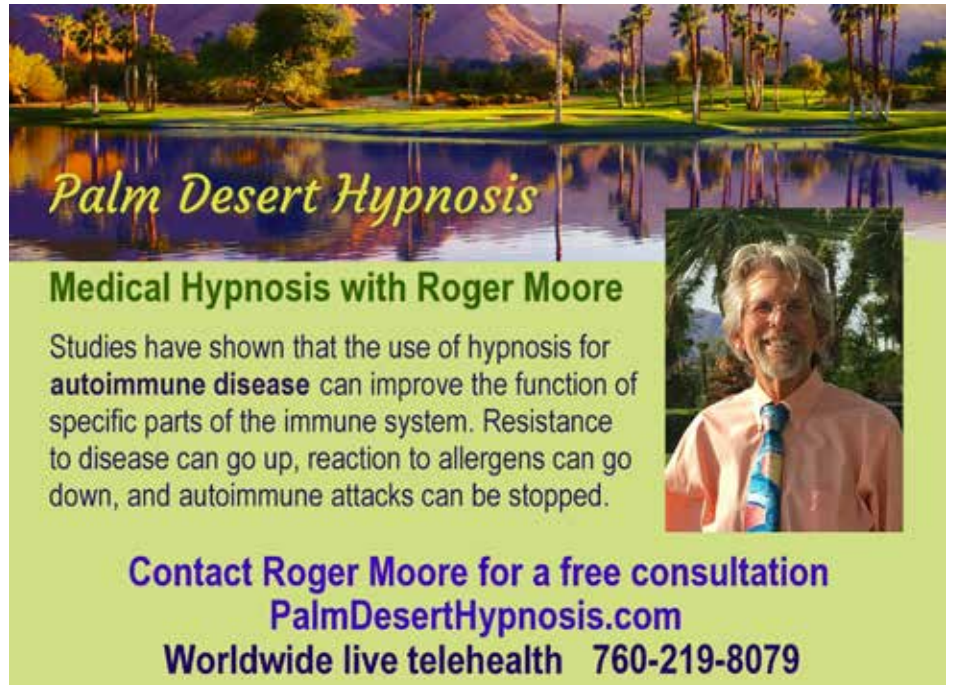
COVID-19 has also forced our health care system to adjust. For example, telemedicine was not commonplace a year ago, but now it is preferred by many clinics, patients, and practitioners. This aids in reducing the potential spread of the virus and helps bridge an accessibility gap, one that burdened specific populations long before the pandemic. With telemedicine, more routine visits and check-ups can be done without leaving home. Telemedicine is being combined with advances in technology that allow people to check their vital signs at home and provide that information to their doctors. Self-administered health check and telemedicine are more examples of how COVID-19 has brought positive change despite its devastation.

The uncomfortable amount of time we have been struggling with this pandemic has brought to the forefront many health disparities and inequalities in our health care system while also highlighting the foundations of health and creating innovative solutions. The lists are long and beyond the reaches of this brief article.

Amidst all this devastation, I hope that the silver linings of increased awareness and daily conversations will lead us toward real change and betterment of the health of our citizens and the larger health care system.

Dr. Jainuddin is a naturopathic medicine doctor with One Life Naturopathic and can be reached at (442) 256.5963 or [www.OneLifeNaturopathic.org](http://www.OneLifeNaturopathic.org).

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## Beyond the Doctor's Office: Treating Autoimmune Disease at Home

By Megan Stone, DO

Millions of people have been diagnosed with an autoimmune disease and the numbers, which include rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, multiple sclerosis, eczema, psoriasis and celiac disease to name a few, are increasing rapidly.

With so many people affected and very little time and attention offered by traditional medical doctors, most people are left feeling helpless. However, patients are often unaware that they have much more power over the development or worsening of autoimmune disease than they realize.

One of the main principles of autoimmune disease is the concept of "energy." If you have an autoimmune disease, you know the severe fatigue, feeling run-down and looking older than your age. For those who have inherited the genes putting them at increased risk for developing an autoimmune disease, their mitochondria (the energy powerhouse of every cell) are not firing on all cylinders. They are not able to fully do their job of producing energy to build proteins, eliminate toxins and repair the body. Therefore, it's up to us to give those mitochondria the best chance possible to do their job, thereby helping you to feel better, have improved mood and energy and prevent the development or worsening of disease. Fueling your mitochondria is not a job that your prescription medication can do - this is a job that only you can do.



Much of the work in healing autoimmunity starts with personal action.

**Stop eating garbage.** I know this statement sounds like a broken record. But I find that while many people know they should eat better, they don't understand the science behind the "why." The more fast food, processed carbs, sugars and excessive alcohol you ingest, the more your mitochondria have to work on overdrive to remove the waste. If you are already working with mitochondria that need a little more help, then the outcome is obvious. The more you stress the system with poor food choices, the less likely you are able to eliminate the waste, thereby increasing the toxins in your body and fueling the autoimmune fire that is waiting to feed on such waste. Translation: you feel worse, and your doctor is left increasing your medication dosage or adding another pill to your treatment.

**Give your mitochondria the fuel they need to do their job correctly.** If you feed an Olympic athlete nothing but fast food, their strength and speed will decrease rapidly. Your mitochondria are millions of little athletes in your body. In addition to glucose and oxygen, they need much more to do their job efficiently. They need B vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. They can't get what they need from junk food. More so, if the mitochondria are too strained from lack of nutrition, they will send a signal for the cell to die prematurely - leading you to yet another problem, working with fewer mitochondria while trying to clear your body of more toxins. The early cell death also contributes to rapid aging in the organ, especially the brain. It's quite simple, feed the athletes (aka your mitochondria), and they will perform well.

**Let's take a look at stress.** Stressing your body creates a spike in cortisol. This spike is a natural process that we need to stay alive and respond to danger. However, when this stress becomes more the norm, and your body routinely has elevated cortisol levels, this leads to stress on every system, creating inflammation everywhere, leading to a cascade of negative effects. When this system kicks up, all other processes are halted, including digestion, detoxification, the building of proteins, essentially all functions that make your body strong and well. Why is that? Because the body senses that you are in danger, and these functions are not the priority when you're in danger. The problem is that there are so many stressors in today's world that keep us in the high-danger mode that our body can no longer tell the difference between what is life-threatening versus what is irritating and will soon pass. Part of the problem is that we are not creating a "life filter" strong enough to sieve through the experiences and tell our brains when it's ok to relax. This relaxation is where we have control over the progression of autoimmune disease, and this is where the work is done by you and NOT your physician. For most people, it doesn't come naturally before months of conscious practice.



Stress reduction practices can help alleviate inflammation.


**Do these things to calm your nervous system:**

- Take time each day to do deep breathing exercises and notice what sort of emotions and messages you are allowing to control your nervous system.
- Ask yourself several times per day, are you feeding the stress and adding to the fire of your autoimmune disease, or are you feeding the calm, giving yourself a better chance at recovery?
- Do an inventory and ask yourself: what obligations, roles and plans do I have that are not essential, and can be replaced with time to relax and heal.
- Guard your "calm" ferociously. Reassess relationships and activities that cause you regular stress and take the steps to resolve them. This process may take a lot of work and include things like finding a new job, going to therapy, leaving a destructive friendship or relationship.


**You have to put in the work to reap the benefits.** These suggestions will improve your autoimmune disease recovery and prevent worsening of the disease. You may seek a functional medicine physician, coach or therapist to guide you, but there won't be a particular prescription or magic pill. There is no easy way to tackle these things. These concepts are in no way meant to suggest that you stop your medication cold-turkey; that action could be very dangerous for you. These principles are complementary to your current treatment. Should you make enough progress to consider stopping your medication, then work with your physician to discuss a safe tapering-off schedule.

More and more people with autoimmune disease are leaving their doctor's office with only a prescription and a feeling of helplessness. This helpless mindset is not necessary; do not accept this fate! You have more power to fuel your mind, body and spirit than you know. You can play a pivotal role in reversing your autoimmune disease and regaining your vitality. Just start where you are and do the best you can with what you have right now.

Dr. Stone is a family and functional medicine physician and founder of Stone Functional Medicine in Palm Desert. She is a Wahls Protocol Certified Practitioner and can be reached at (760) 350.6988 or www.stonefunmed.com.




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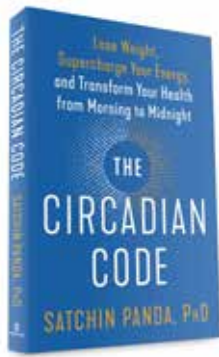




## Time-Restricted Eating: The Key to Good Health?

### Review of *The Circadian Code*

By Joseph E. Scherger, MD, MPH



When we eat is more important than what we eat. That is the claim of Satchin Panda, PhD, leading expert in circadian rhythm research. Dr. Panda is the founder of the Center for Circadian Biology at the Salk Institute and an adjunct professor at the University of California, San Diego. He has ample research to support his claim.

The circadian rhythm is our 24-hour biological clock. Every organ and cell in our body has such a clock and it varies according to function, such as digestion and sleep.

Panda argues for time-restricted eating (TRE) based on the fact that our digestive circadian clock needs at least 12 hours daily of not eating to allow for repair and food processing for the rest of our body. Breaking this 12-hour code will cause us to gain weight. After 12 hours of fasting, we burn fat and lose weight. This fat-burning process is consistent with the intermittent-fasting approach that has become popular since Jason Fung published *The Obesity Code* (2016).

Panda shows that with every hour beyond 12 of TRE, the benefits double. Patients will

make the most robust changes with restricting their eating to within an 8 hour window (ie., all meals between 11am and 7pm; not including light beverages).

After making a case for TRE, Panda recommends other important healthy lifestyle measures such as avoiding processed carbs and other processed foods, as well as exercise, restful sleep and stress reduction. The book's section on sleep is especially useful in explaining the rationale for getting 7-8 hours of sleep to maintain the circadian rhythm. I am putting on my red glasses to block out blue light much more regularly since reading the book and am also reducing my screen time in the evening.



Limiting eating to an 8-hour window allows your body time for repair.

*The Circadian Code* is an excellent complement to the other nutrition and lifestyle books I recommend by authors such as Mark Hyman, Jason Fung, David Perlmutter, Dale Bredeesen and William Davis. My short book, *Lean and Fit* (2019, Third Edition) and website, [www.leanandfitlife.com](http://www.leanandfitlife.com), also synthesize this approach of a healthy, low-carb diet with intermittent fasting.

Joseph Scherger, MD, MPH is co-founder of *Restore Health in Indian Wells*, a clinic dedicated to reversing disease. For more information, visit [www.restorehealth.me](http://www.restorehealth.me) or call (760) 408.2720.



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## Working in Harmony with Your Microbiome

By Jenny M. Wheeler, MD

The devastating loss of human life from COVID-19 has recently highlighted the immense power of tiny, invisible microbes to shape our human experience. Microbes are microscopic organisms, including a variety of widely diverse species of bacteria and viruses. Bacterial species are highly adaptable to surviving almost any habitat, be it boiling geysers, the depths of the darkest ocean vents, and even, as we know, in our own human intestines.

Microbiome is a term used to describe the vast ecosystem of mostly beneficial microbes that live along the lining of your intestines. Knowledge about the microbiome is exploding right now as scientists employ genomic sequencing technology to support links between an imbalance in the microbiome and just about every chronic disease ranging from acne to Alzheimer's, diabetes and obesity.

Humans have co-evolved with microbiota in symbiosis over millennia. We rely on friendly gut bacterial species which reside in the large intestine for a myriad of chemical interactions that provide beneficial byproducts as diverse as vitamin K to tryptophan for the body's use. The microbiome helps the human host by digesting fiber that humans lack the enzymes to digest. In the process of bacterial digestion or fermentation, many beneficial bi-products like those mentioned above are released for humans to use. Short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs) are especially important byproducts of bacterial fermentation, and the effects of certain SCFAs have anti-inflammatory actions in the body.

Some microbes are disruptive and it is not uncommon for these problematic species to colonize the gut. The beneficial symbiosis relies on balance – namely, the beneficial bacteria outnumbering the problematic, symptom-causing microbes, and keeping them in check is an important factor for overall health.

What can you do to encourage the growth of your friendly gut microbiome and discourage the growth of those less than friendly bugs? There are many simple things that, if done well and consistently, can go a long way in supporting your healthy flora.

- Reduce stress; if your stress level is affecting you negatively, your friendly microbes suffer
- Reduce processed foods of all varieties, including “healthy” food that comes in packages
- Increase your intake of dietary fiber, especially prebiotic fibers
- Reduce caffeine and alcohol intake
- Reduce added/refined sugar intake, this includes reducing artificial sweeteners
- Minimize the use of acid suppressing medications (PPIs and H2 blockers, for example, omeprazole or ranitidine)
- Minimize antibiotic use unless truly necessary
- Exercise, dance, swim, practice “Earthing,” spend time outdoors in nature

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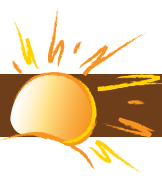
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# Living Wellness

with Jennifer Di Francesco



## It Takes a Village to Stay Healthy and Fit

As state health officials announced mandates requiring the closure of non-essential public spaces, including gyms, many people began to wonder where to look for inspiration with daily exercise. The fitness industry is certainly being tested in 2020. Going into the fall season, exercise centers in California are working within maximum occupancy mandates that allow less than 50 percent of capacity. These restrictions and the precarious nature of a pandemic create uncertainty resulting in only 20 percent of Americans feeling comfortable gathering in gyms.

As local wellness businesses continue to push their boundaries to become more creative, similarly, self-confined individuals have had to find new ways to engage in movement and fitness.

The fitness industry is a 95-billion-dollar business that will continue to reinvent itself. Its history goes back to ancient Greece. Two thousand years ago in Athens, a gym consisted of a large open-air space devoted primarily to men training for Olympic sport. Gyms are now reverting to this with accommodations of open-air options such as tented outdoor structures and programs for running, biking and hiking. As the Coachella Valley begins to blossom into its ideal seasonal fall temperatures, we will see more local studios attempting to accommodate this "open-air" experience. In addition, many facilities are offering digital classes.

The current pandemic is creating a fitness evolution. This has occurred in history before. Following the Spanish Flu, in the late 1920s, Joseph Pilates announced to the world a system of exercise that helped participants stay healthy. To this day, Pilates is regularly practiced by many. Throughout time, exercise ebbs and flows, yet it has always had a presence in our lives.

During this current period, we can create our personal at-home practices that bring us joy and wellness. Walking is more popular than ever this year. At-home resistance bands, spinning bikes, suspension systems, such as TRX, or an open space at home for a dance or yoga class, help reduce stress. These are all healthy personal empowerment approaches.

We must also not forget to support the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of our local gyms, which on many occasions, teach us how to move properly and feel good while inspiring us to reach new levels. Throughout history, gyms have been important social institutions, such as in ancient Greece where philosophers and academics gathered to socialize. We cannot overlook the importance of connecting with others and the sense of place and people we develop from our gym culture.

Choosing exercise feeds our physical and mental health, and there is no better time to seize the moment. Let's keep uplifting ourselves at home and find ways to reincorporate our local studio, gym or wellness professional who is working with perseverance to capture our imagination and keep us healthy.

Jennifer Di Francesco is a wellness explorer and desert adventurer and can be reached at [zenjzen@aol.com](mailto:zenjzen@aol.com).

## Tuning in to Health

By Barbra Angel, PhD and Michael K. Butler, BA;PTA;CSCS\*D;RSCC\*D NMT

When it comes to pain and bodily dysfunction, there seems to be a positive shift from doctors' visits for prescribed medications towards natural healing modalities. However, with so many alternative therapies on the market today, it is sometimes difficult to know where to start. And many would never think of turning to tuning forks.

When you hear 'tuning forks,' you might think of a device that tunes musical instruments. While this is true, these powerful instruments can also be used to tune the human body and have been for centuries.

All humans have their own particular frequencies, which include our organs, cells and tissues. These frequencies can be altered or "reset" by musical instruments. Vibrations occur in our cells when certain sound waves penetrate the body. Because our bodies are made up of 70 percent water, sound waves can be absorbed very well throughout the body (sound resonates four times faster in water). The vibration within our body can potentially bring about improved health by making the body and immune system stronger. We call this healing through sound and vibration cellular resonance therapy (CRT).

How does it work? Our bodies are constantly trying to achieve balance of the energy known as Qi ("chi") that travels through pathways in our bodies called meridians. When energy gets disrupted or unbalanced, and these meridians cannot properly do their job of nourishing the body, symptoms and illness may follow. With tuning forks, sound waves travel through our energy fields, working to establish new patterns of balance while ridding the body of irregular patterns

responsible for tissue damage and illness.

There are techniques of CRT using different tuning fork frequencies for specific organs. Through the process of tuning, the organs heal. The tuning fork's pitch depends on the length of the sound wave, so picking the right frequency from the tuning fork for that specific body structure is crucial for the treatment to be successful.

Some of the known benefits of cellular resonance therapy include improved circulation, lower blood pressure, increased energy, the reduction of acute and chronic joint and muscle tension, reduction of pain and swelling, promotion of deep and balanced breathing, DNA repair, cell rejuvenation, voice healing, balanced emotions, stress reduction and improved hair, skin and organ health.

Tuning forks are an effective, alternative approach to healing mind, body and spirit. The therapy is comfortable, safe and a relaxing way to tune into - and tune up - your body.

Michael Butler and Dr. Angel are co-owners of Kinetix Health and Performance Center in Palm Desert. Butler holds a state license as a physical therapist assistant and national certifications of distinction through the NSCA as a strength and conditioning coach. Dr. Angel is an internationally recognized naturopath and creator of Tune & Heal (USA) and The Sound Academy (Europe). For more information visit [www.tuneheal.com](http://www.tuneheal.com) or call (760) 200.1719.

Sources: 1) Sound cellular Research <https://tama-do.com/roothtmls/cell-research.html>; 2) Cellular Resonance Therapy Center <https://www.barbraangel.com/en/cell-resonance-therapy-research-center/6/>; 3) McKusick ED. Tuning the Human Biofield; Healing with Vibrational Sound Therapy. Rochester VT: healing Arts Press. 2014; 4) Rubik B. The Biofield Hypothesis: Its Biophysical Basis and Role in Medicine. J Altern Complement MED. 2002;8 (6): 703-17.



Tuning forks for healing and balancing can help athletic and overall performance.

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Michael K. Butler  
B.A.;P.T.A.;CSCS\*D RSCC\*D PES;NMT





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Alzheimer's Coachella Valley is a community based 501 (c)(3) nonprofit providing support and services for residents living in the Coachella Valley with cognitive impairment, their families and care partners. All funds raised here remain local to fill the need for professional and peer-led programs. We are not affiliated with any national organizations.



## Coping with Bereavement

Provided by Alzheimer's Coachella Valley

Grieving is a normal process of reacting to the loss of a loved one and affects you mentally, physically, socially and emotionally. While there is no real order to the grieving process, those affected may experience a range of feelings, including denial, disbelief, anger, confusion, shock, sadness, despair, guilt and anxiety.

It can also cause physical problems such as sleeping disorders, changes in appetite, illness, or worsening of an underlying health condition.

Grief is a process of letting go, learning to accept and live with loss; the amount of time it takes each person is very personal.

"Usually people experience a strong acute grief reaction when someone dies, and at the same time they begin the gradual process of adapting to the loss," explains psychiatrist M. Katherine Shear, MD at Columbia University. "To adapt to a loss, a person needs to accept its finality and understand what it means to them. They also have to find a way to re-envision their life with possibilities for happiness and for honoring their enduring connection to the person who died."

You may not be prepared for the intensity and duration of emotions or how quickly your moods can change, but these feelings are healthy and appropriate. It takes time to fully absorb the impact of a major loss. The best thing you can do is allow yourself to grieve and take care of yourself. Here are some tips for healing:

**Seek out caring people.** Find relatives and friends who can understand your feelings of loss. Join support groups with others who are experiencing similar losses.

**Express your feelings.** Tell others how you are feeling; it will help you to work through the grieving process.

**Take care of your health.** Maintain regular contact with your family physician, and be sure to eat well and get plenty of rest. Be aware of the danger of developing a dependence on medication or alcohol to deal with your grief.

**Accept that life is for the living.** It takes effort to begin to live again in the present and not dwell on the past.

**Postpone major life changes.** Try to hold off on making any big changes such as moving, remarrying, changing jobs, or having another child. You should give yourself time to adjust to your loss.

**Be patient.** It can take months or even years to absorb a major loss and accept your changed life.

**Seek outside help when necessary.** If your grief feels too much to bear, seek professional assistance to help work through your grief. It's a sign of strength, not weakness, to seek help.

Alzheimer's Coachella Valley now offers a bereavement support group every first and third Monday of the month, 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. It is open to those who have recently experienced the loss of a loved one. Currently live-streaming, the group will convene at ACV's office once county restrictions allow in-person meetings.

Alzheimer's Coachella Valley is located in the Berger Foundation Center, 42600 Cook Street in Palm Desert. For more information or to register, call (760) 776-3100 or [info@cvalzheimers.org](mailto:info@cvalzheimers.org). Sources: 1) <https://medlineplus.gov/bereavement.html>; 2) <https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2017/10/coping-grief>; 3) <https://www.mhanational.org/bereavement-and-grief>

## Home is (Still) Where the Heart is

Replacing surviving with truly living

By Amy Austin, RN, PsyD, LMFT

Home: "Relating to the place where one lives. The place where one lives permanently, especially as a member of a family or household."

My definition of home during a pandemic: "The place where one survives." And not just in the literal sense because we are all dealing with the serious challenges of trying to remain COVID-19 free - and trying to care for others' health and safety by wearing our masks, maintaining physical distance and staying home if we feel ill.

When I talk about surviving, I am speaking about an emotional state that affects us when experiencing a traumatic event (in this case, an ongoing threat). Physically, increased amounts of stress hormones (adrenaline and cortisol) are secreted in the body, creating a fight or flight experience. When we are hyper-vigilant, and on high alert, anxiety levels rise, which is certainly not conducive to maintaining a healthy emotional self, much less healthy and adaptive interpersonal relationships.

There is a vast difference between surviving and living. Pandemic or no pandemic, some people live in survival mode and don't even realize it - or avoid or hide from it - until the symptoms of surviving cause enough mental, emotional and perhaps physically painful symptoms that they can no longer be overlooked. Add a pandemic to the mix with highly suggested sheltering in place guidelines, and now the definition of home can take on a whole new meaning. Tell anyone they can't do something and the rebellious teenager within takes over imploring, "Get me the hell out of here!" Compound this with being around the same family members, day in and day out...well, did anyone just hear me scream?

Here are a few ideas for creating a home where surviving is replaced by truly living:

**Keep it simple.** I know I'm showing my age right now, but I didn't grow up with a computer or Facebook. And I survived. But did I truly live? Contradictions are part and parcel of life's complexities. Did you see that little piece of deflection perfection just now? But, seriously, we can all laugh, play old-fashioned board games (they can be fun), read a great book, and talk at the table instead of checking social media or video game distractions.

**Engage.** Utilize this time to grow closer to loved ones and yourself consciously. Be curious, interested, listen!

**Take time for yourself.** Implement more positive self-care modalities into your day, like taking a few moments for stillness, conscious breathing, eating right, exercise, good music, prayer and silliness.

Recently, I heard a comment from celebrity comic Howie Mandel about taking his wife out on a date. When he was asked where they went, he replied, "I took her to the guest room."

We can find a sense of home when we allow ourselves to discover the most meaningful parts of ourselves through self-discovery and authentic connections with others. Add that to the implementation of random and very conscious acts of kindness on a daily basis, and I'd say home truly IS where the heart is, and where the heart wants to be.

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





# To ROTH or Not to ROTH? That is the Question.

By Michele T. Sarna, CFP®, AIF®

I often get questions on ROTH contributions and how they work, who they work for, and which is better to contribute to - a traditional or ROTH IRA. There is a lot to be said about ROTHs. Below is a brief summary.

Named after former Delaware Senator William Roth Jr., the ROTH IRA was established by the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997, followed by the ROTH 401(k) several years later.

A ROTH contribution is an after-tax contribution from earned income to an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) or company-sponsored retirement plan, such as a 401(k) or 403(b). The funds deposited into the account have already been taxed by the federal and state (if applicable) governments, whereas a contribution to a traditional IRA or retirement plan has not.

The growth in the ROTH account grows tax free, which is a major bonus for this type of account. Unlike a traditional IRA or retirement plan, the growth along with the contributions are taxed when withdrawn.

Contributions from ROTH accounts may be withdrawn tax free and penalty free for any reason at any time. The earnings, however, follow a five-year holding period rule. The five-year clock starts when the first contribution is made to the ROTH account. In addition, if a distribution is taken that includes earnings, a 10 percent penalty will apply to that portion of the withdrawal unless you are 59 1/2 years old, disabled, or using the funds for a first-time home purchase.

Not everyone is eligible to contribute directly to a ROTH IRA. Your modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) must fall below specified limits set by the IRS every year. If your MAGI is too high, you may want to consider a backdoor ROTH IRA strategy.

A backdoor ROTH IRA contribution entails a few steps and guidelines to follow to avoid additional penalties. You will owe taxes when converting to a ROTH IRA. It's important to work with a financial professional when implementing a ROTH conversion to ensure it is executed properly.

Although employer-sponsored plans offering ROTH contributions do not have MAGI limitations, everyone's situation is different. If your earning potential is set to grow in the future, paying taxes now on contributions may make sense. On the other hand, converting some of your pretax contributions each year will start the five-year clock and provide tax-free distributions in retirement.

There is a lot to consider when exploring retirement contributions, including careful planning and budgeting. As a rule of thumb, it's important to have money in both types of accounts at retirement.

Michele Sarna is a certified financial planner™ practitioner with Beacon Pointe Advisors and can be reached at (760) 932.0930 or msarna@beaconpointe.com.

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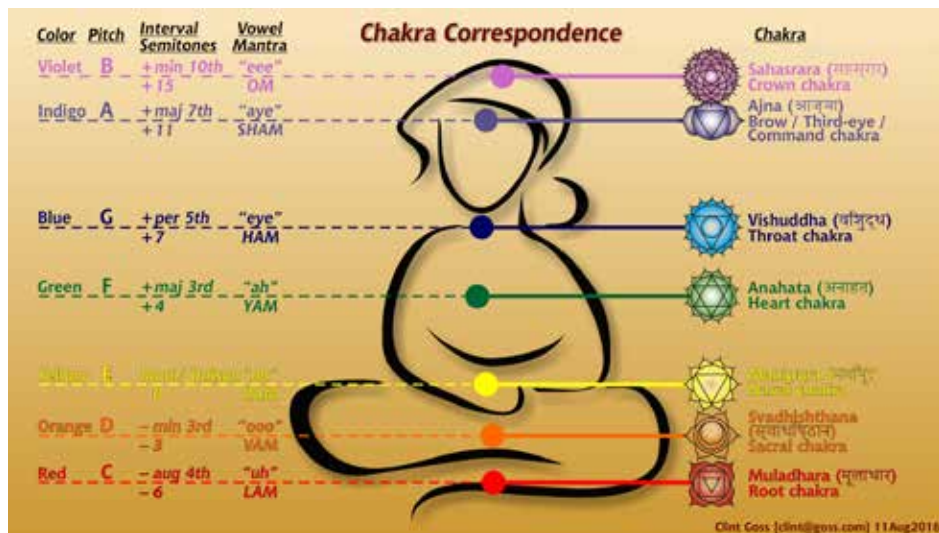


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### Healing Through Chakra Balancing

Continued from page 13



your lower ribs attach to the breastbone, this chakra governs the digestive organs (stomach, small intestine, liver, pancreas, etc.) It supports our powers of discernment, allowing us to take in and "digest" information in an empowered way.<sup>2</sup> Vibrating to the key of E 528 Hz (parade marches), when balanced it generates feelings of confident self-acceptance and will power.

**Heart chakra.** (green) This important middle chakra is located in the center of the chest. It corresponds to the heart and thymus gland promoting love, empathy, compassion and kindness. When blocked, one may lack caring and appreciation for others. It vibrates to the key of F 639 Hz (think choir music).

**Throat chakra.** (blue) Correlates with the thyroid and voice box, and thus, our ability to communicate, speak our truth and express ourselves. Holding secrets or not speaking up can throw it out of balance and can spur anger and violence. It vibrates to the key of G 741 Hz (opera music).

**Third eye.** (indigo) Located in the center of our forehead and connected to the pineal gland, eyes, ears and olfactory system, this chakra is linked to our sense of awareness and spirituality. It can help us become wiser and more intuitive, and when out of balance, it is harder to anticipate and remember things. It vibrates to the key of A 852 Hz (classical music).

**Crown chakra.** (violet) Located at the top of the head where our entire energetic being culminates. It governs the brain and pituitary gland and affects our intellectual functions and highest experiences of bliss. You often see a halo around this chakra as it is the supreme contact center with our higher being and generates happiness and overall health. It vibrates to the key of B 963 Hz (South African or sitar Indian music)

These imperative centers are opened and stimulated clinically through many modalities, including sound vibrations, acupuncture and tuning forks, as well as through meditation, imaging colors, crystals and chakra dance.

As acupuncturists, we are not treating any specific disease but rather unblocking and opening your energy centers to allow the body and mind to become more balanced and better tuned for enhanced self-healing.

Dr. Sheppard is a licensed acupuncturist and doctor of traditional Chinese medicine. She is the owner of AcQpoint Wellness Center in Palm Desert and can be reached at (760) 345.2200 or visit www.AcQPoint.com.

References: 1) www.flutopedia.com/sound\_color.htm; 2) www.symmetryyoga.com/chakras-mapping-the-emotional-body



## Mental Health Support Available for All Ages

The holiday season, COVID-19 precautions and other situations can increase behavioral health needs.

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## Lemony Kale and White Bean Soup

By Dipika Patel

Servings: 4

Ingredients:

- 30 ounces of cooked cannellini beans (2 cans)
- 1 ½ cups of chopped kale (remove stems) you can also use spinach, Swiss chard or collard greens
- 4 cups low sodium vegetable stock (or chicken broth)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil or avocado oil
- 1 large yellow onion, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, finely minced
- 1 tablespoon coconut butter/coconut manna
- ½ teaspoon fresh rosemary
- ½ teaspoon fresh thyme
- ⅛ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon turmeric powder
- 1 small lemon, juiced
- Maldon sea salt to taste and freshly ground black pepper

Instructions:

1. Heat olive oil/avocado oil in a heavy-bottomed stockpot over medium heat.
2. Add in the onion, let it sauté until it has become translucent, just beginning to brown.
3. Add in garlic, and then cook it for a couple of minutes, stir in the coconut butter.
4. Add in the herbs as the coconut butter melts. Combine the stock and lemon juice and add to the pot.
5. Turn down the heat, put the lid on and let it cook down for another 15 minutes.
6. Add in the white beans and chopped kale, continue to cook for another 5 minutes
7. Your soup is now ready to serve.



Dipika is a Holistic Health & Lifestyle Coach who empowers clients to activate a balanced lifestyle of the mind, body and soul. She can be reached at [dipika@dipikapatel.life](mailto:dipika@dipikapatel.life).

Eat, Drink and Be Healthy

Continued from page 1

to a spoonful of velvety ice cream (and I'm a sugar and dairy-free girl!). We don't often consider the importance of texture for food cravings. While our desire for a specific taste (sweet, salty, sour, savory) usually drives cravings, the texture greatly contributes to overall satisfaction - the melt-in-your-mouth bite of a creamy dessert or the crunchy burst of a cheesy Cheetos (a great alternative to these in the next issue).

So, let's get back to that ice cream. Healthy alternatives usually start with more nutritious ingredients, and you can find all of these at chain grocery stores, but more options are available at health food stores. My go-to ice cream is So Delicious no sugar added coconutmilk non-dairy frozen dessert sweetened with monk fruit. A serving of vanilla bean (2/3 cup) delivers 9 grams of healthy fat, zero cholesterol, 10 grams of fiber (chicory root) and 2 grams of sugar. And it's very creamy.

Compare that to a serving of Häagen-Dazs (less at only ½ cup per serving): 18 grams of dairy fat, 110 grams of cholesterol, zero fiber, and 18 grams of sugar (even their non-dairy coconut caramel has 20 grams of sugar!).

For the chocolate sauce, I use 100% cacao mixed with coconut milk and stevia or monk fruit (all to your taste and texture). Make extra to store in the fridge and heat for future servings (keep it easy). Sprinkle with Lily's sugar-free chocolate chips (stevia sweetened), nuts, and maybe even Sweet



Ingredients for a healthier sundae with 2g sugar, no dairy, high fiber and zero cholesterol

Rose Coconut Whipped Topping (plus 1g of cane sugar), and voila! You have a savory, satisfying and healthier alternative to your less-than-healthy ice cream sundae.

Drink up!

How great is it to wake up to the crisp winter air? This long hot summer certainly enhanced my appreciation for cool mornings, and the perfect complement is a cozy warm cup of coffee or tea.

Thoughts of pumpkin or gingerbread lattes may come to mind, but let's look at an option that can help reduce inflammation and deliver that healthy fat to enliven our brain and reduce cravings throughout the day.

My go-to is a frothy vanilla golden milk latte with MCT oil. With Ceylon cinnamon, ginger, turmeric and a few drops of vanilla stevia, it delivers a warm and satisfying sense of the season while providing a plethora of healing spices that make you feel good with every sip. It's a great way to start the day, and certainly better than that guilt you'd feel from consuming a sugar-laden alternative.

It's simple and starts with quality ingredients. I recommend organic coffee (or tea) and unsweetened coconut milk. I make the golden milk in bulk (again, for ease) by combining equal parts of Ceylon cinnamon (the healthy cinnamon), ground ginger,

Continued on page 25





# Gluten-Free with Tiffany



## Easy Spiced Holiday Fruit Bake (Gluten-Free and Dairy-Free)

Is there anything better to get us into the holiday mood than the nostalgic smells of the season? Most popular holiday dishes offer you that wonderful aroma, but are also heavy on sugar and fat. Many of us would like to commit to healthier family traditions this year, so make it an easy transition by adding this spiced holiday fruit bake to your menu. This warm and flavorful dish is a crowd pleaser and quite versatile. The fruit bake is delicious enough to act as a standalone dessert, or you can serve it with brunch as a topping over waffles, yogurt, or oatmeal. This dish would also be a wonderful upgrade from the traditional cranberry side dish.

**Ingredients:**

Gather 4-5 fruits of your choice (fresh is best).

A great combination: \*

- 3 apples - cored and sliced
- 3 pears - cored and sliced
- 1-½ cups fresh cranberries
- 1 orange - juiced
- ½ tablespoon orange zest
- ½ lemon - juiced

- ½ cup maple syrup or sweetener of choice (coconut sugar works well, too)
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon + extra for serving (Ceylon cinnamon is ideal)
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- 2 tablespoons coconut oil
- Optional: 1/3 cup chopped nuts of choice (pecans, walnuts, etc.)
- \*green grapes also work well, in addition to the above

**Instructions:**

Preheat the oven to 300 F. Grease a 9x12 baking dish with coconut oil spray or oil of choice, set aside. Combine apples and pears in a large mixing bowl. Add lemon juice, cinnamon and nutmeg. Toss well to coat the fruit with the juice and spices. Transfer the fruits to your prepared baking dish and add in cranberries, mix again.

In another mixing bowl, whisk fresh orange juice, maple syrup (or preferred sweetener), orange zest, and coconut oil into a dressing. Add nuts, if desired. Pour the dressing over the fruit and toss well to combine.

Bake in the preheated oven for one hour. Let cool for a while at room temperature. Sprinkle with additional cinnamon, serve warm and enjoy.

Tiffany is a certified nutrition consultant and functional diagnostic nutrition practitioner and can be reached at (760) 285.1221. For more information, visit [www.tiffanydalton.com](http://www.tiffanydalton.com). Her holiday recipe is adapted from [www.cottercrunch.com](http://www.cottercrunch.com).



**Eat, Drink and Be Healthy**

Continued from page 24

and turmeric. I sometimes add a dash of nutmeg and cardamom for added benefits, based on a recipe by Jessica Needle, ND you can find on our website.



Start your day with brain fuel and healing spices in this creamy dairy- and sugar-free latte.

So, there you have it, our first two satisfying alternatives to consider. I look forward to providing more with each new issue. Until then, I recommend experimenting with different natural sugar-free sweeteners like stevia and monk fruit to find one that you prefer. I like flavored stevia, which can be found at Clark's Nutrition in Rancho Mirage and Sprout's in La Quinta. I keep vanilla, cinnamon and caramel handy at all times as they can be used to sweeten everything from smoothies to baked goods, from cocktails (yes, we will share those, too) to sauces.

Remember, healthy living starts with a mindset, so these delights will be most satisfying if you are genuinely committed to living your best life. Get excited about it! Once you make the transition, you'll truly crave these healthy foods and easily turn away from things you used to love because you have come to embrace - and understand the value of - foods that serve your body well.

For additional resources, visit [www.DesertHealthNews.com](http://www.DesertHealthNews.com) and search these items: eat healthy fats, golden milk, coconut oil; in Top Categories see recipes.

Lauren Del Sarto is the founder and publisher of Desert Health, a cancer survivor and healthy lifestyle advocate. Check out her blog at [www.LaurenDelSarto.com](http://www.LaurenDelSarto.com) or email [Lauren@DesertHealthNews.com](mailto:Lauren@DesertHealthNews.com).

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Working in Harmony with Your Microbiome

Continued from page 19

Fiber intake is a special topic and the key for many of us who want to optimize our microbiome health, especially those with more conventional American dietary habits. The signature of a healthy gut microbiome is a diversity of beneficial species. You can encourage this by feeding your microbiome a variety of plant fibers and indigestible starches. Prebiotic is the term used to describe sources of fiber that help beneficial microbes thrive. Including specific types of probiotic foods and prebiotic fiber in our diets can be a targeted approach for certain specific types of problems. In general, most Americans can benefit from simply increasing the diversity of plant fibers in their diet.

Fiber tolerance varies among individuals. A simple starting strategy is to focus on eating a wide variety of plant-based food. Foods that are rich sources of fiber include all fruits and vegetables, green leafy lettuces and greens, oats, lentils, beans, whole grains, nuts and seeds. You can easily add coconut, chia seed and flaxseed to many recipes. Apples, bananas, garlic, onion and eggplant are a few examples of prebiotic fiber sources. There are many sources of fiber and indigestible starches to meet even the strictest dietary needs. However, it may take a bit of trial and error to find those that work best with your physiology. While you should prioritize this intake from whole food sources, fiber supplements can be helpful.



A high fiber diet can help optimize microbiome health.

According to microbiome research, increased fiber can have many benefits, including improved energy, skin tone, digestion, elimination, reduced pain, and even improved mood and memory.

You may experience minor uncomfortable adjustments to your usual bowel habits as you increase your daily fiber intake, especially if using supplements. This discomfort should be transitory. As you increase fiber, be sure to also increase your intake of water or another non-caffeinated unsweetened beverage such as herbal tea.

Once you determine the best sources of fiber for your microbiome, you should feel better overall because you and your microbiome will be working in harmony, symbiosis.

Dr. Jenny Wheeler is a board-certified family medicine physician who practices primary care medicine with Riverside-San Bernardino Indian Health in Thermal, CA. She is certified through the Institute of Functional Medicine and is available for functional medicine consults through Restore Health in Indian Wells.





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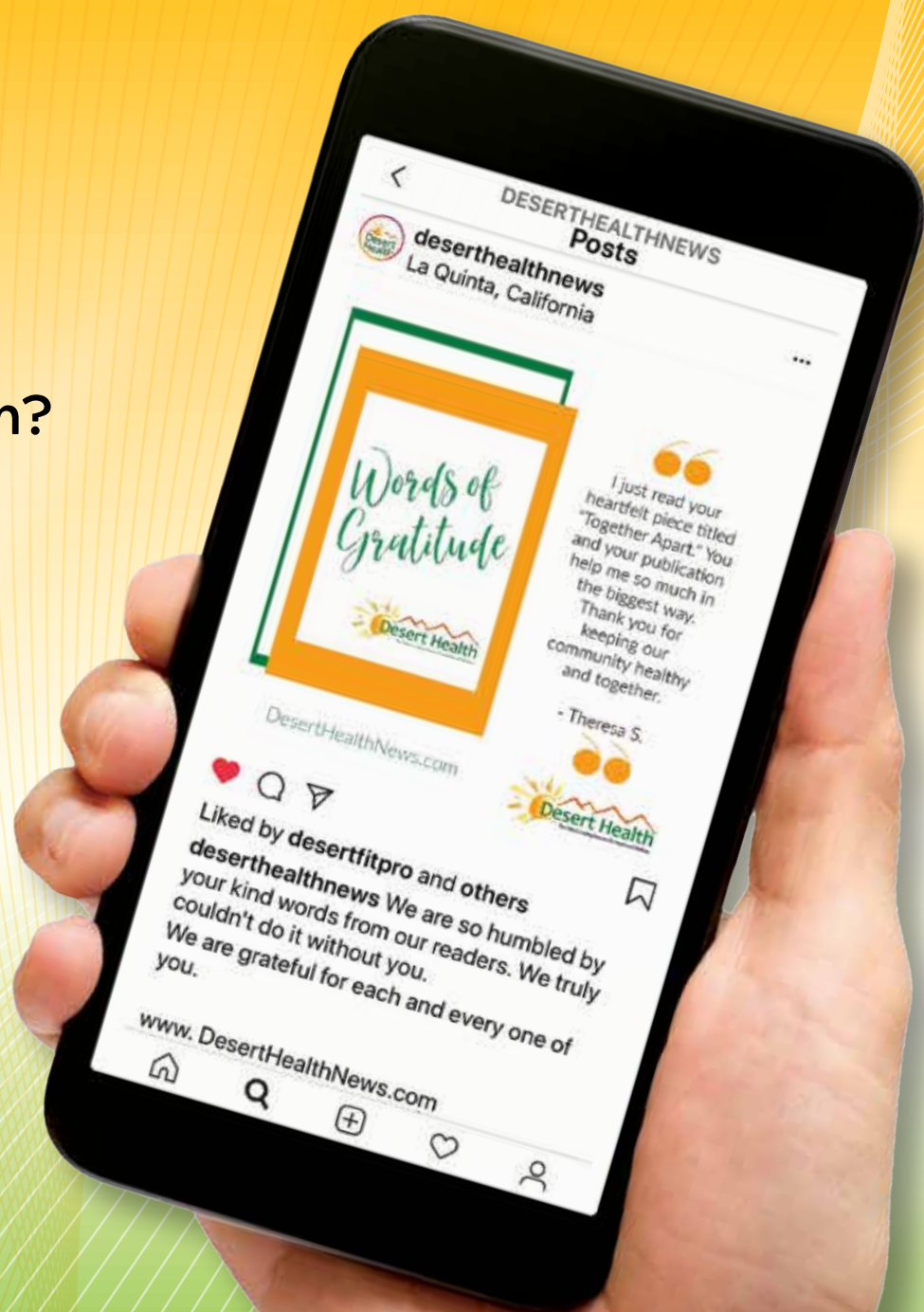
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