

Healthy Lifestyles

March 4, 2026

The changing narrative on pelvic health and the key role of physical therapy

By Mariel Mustello,
PT, DPT

Dalton Physical Therapy

Do you plan your day around bathroom access? Avoid certain activities because of leakage when you cough, sneeze, or lift? Feel a constant urge to go, or experience heaviness and pressure when carrying your child or grandchild?

For generations, these symptoms were often dismissed as “just part of life,” especially for women. Pelvic health issues were treated as taboo - something to tolerate rather than address. Today, that narrative is changing. With growing awareness and advances in pelvic floor physical therapy, many of these symptoms are not only treatable, but often fully reversible.

Pelvic physical therapy focuses on the pelvic floor - a hammock-like group of muscles at the base of the pelvis that forms the foundation of the core. However, this system does not function alone. It works as part of an integrated network that includes the diaphragm, abdominal, and back muscles.

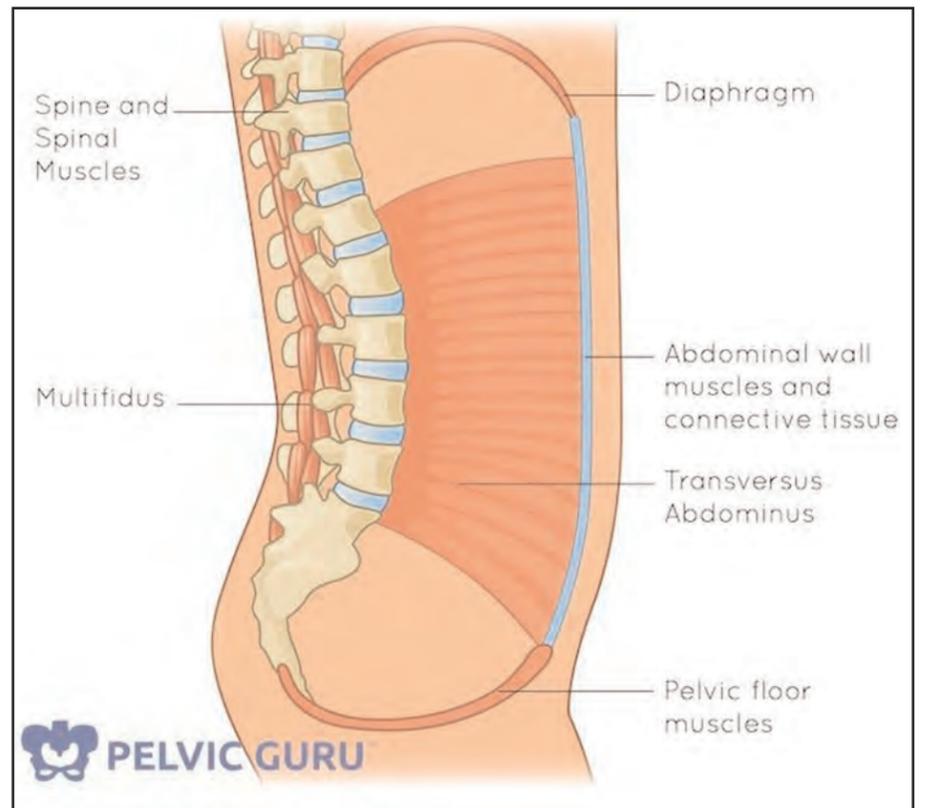
The pelvic floor plays several essential roles in the body, including supporting internal organs such as the bladder, bowel, and uterus; controlling bowel and bladder function; stabilizing the trunk and core; contributing to sexual health; and assisting with

circulation of blood and lymphatic fluid.

Pelvic floor symptoms can arise from many causes. Abdominal or pelvic surgeries, childbirth, hormonal changes, gastrointestinal issues, muscle weakness or tension, cancer treatments, and nervous system dysfunction can all contribute to pelvic dysfunction. Symptoms may include urinary or bowel leakage, pelvic pain, pressure or heaviness, urgency, painful intercourse, and chronic discomfort that interferes with daily life.

One of the most common misconceptions about pelvic health is that kegels are the universal solution. While kegels can be helpful for some individuals, they are far from a one-size-fits-all approach. In many cases, pelvic floor dysfunction is not caused by weakness alone - it may involve poor coordination, muscle tension, breathing dysfunction, or nervous system involvement. Another widespread misconception is that pelvic physical therapy is only for women. Pelvic physical therapy can be highly beneficial for men as well, particularly for those experiencing incontinence or recovering from surgeries such as prostate removal.

At Dalton Physical Therapy, pelvic physical therapy takes an individualized approach.



Treatment begins with a comprehensive assessment to fully understand each client's symptoms, contributing factors, movement patterns, and lifestyle demands. Education is a critical first step - helping clients understand what their body is doing and why symptoms are occurring empowers them to take control of their recovery.

Care Plans

Care may include strengthening, mobility work, coordination training, breathing techniques, lifting mechanics, nervous system regulation strategies, and individualized movement programs. Each plan is tailored to the individual - their symptoms, goals, daily activities, and long-term health needs.

Pelvic symptoms do not have to define your life.

Leakage, pain, and constant urgency are not inevitable parts of aging, motherhood, or daily living - and they are not something you simply have to accept. With the right care, many people experience significant improvement or complete resolution of symptoms.

Pelvic physical therapy offers a path forward - one built on understanding, personalized care, and evidence-based treatment - helping people take control of their pelvic health and return to the life they want to live.

Dr. Mariel Mustello holds a Doctor of Physical Therapy and dual Bachelor's degrees in Health Sciences and Psychology from Nazareth College, blending clinical skill with genuine compassion. For more information, visit Daltonpt.com.

Retirement as a new chapter: Rediscovering purpose, connection and opportunity

**By Brian Zeidan
Brookmeade Community**

Retirement is often described as the finish line after decades of hard work, but more and more people are recognizing it for what it truly is — the beginning of a new chapter filled with opportunity, flexibility, and renewed purpose.

Recently at the Brookmeade Community, we had the privilege of celebrating the retirement of longtime CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) Karen Robinson. Karen dedicated 35 years to caring for residents here, and prior to her healthcare career, she proudly served in the United States Air Force. Her journey reflects a lifelong commitment to service — first to her country and then to the residents and families she supported every day.



Pictured above from left are Karen Stritt, CEO & President of the Brookmeade Community, Karen Robinson, CNA & Retiree, Brian Zeidan, Administrator, Jamie Stickle, Human Resources Director and Chelsea Moore, Director Of Nursing. Courtesy photo

What makes Karen's transition especially meaningful is that retirement for her isn't simply an ending. Like many professionals today, she has chosen a flexible path forward, continuing to contribute on a per diem basis while embracing more personal time. It's a great example of how retirement is evolving.

Purpose Doesn't Retire - Karen's story highlights something we see often - purpose doesn't retire when a career ends. Research consistently shows that maintaining a sense of purpose contributes to emotional well-being, cognitive engagement, physical health, and overall life satisfaction.

Purpose doesn't have to come from full-time employment. It can come from relationships, hobbies, volunteering, family engagement or personal growth. Many retirees discover passions they simply didn't have time for earlier — gardening, travel, art, fitness, or community involvement.

At Brookmeade Community, we offer a variety of volunteer opportunities that allow individuals to pursue their passions, stay engaged, and continue making meaningful contributions.

The key isn't staying busy — it's staying fulfilled.

Flexibility in Retirement: A Growing Trend - Another growing trend is what many call "hybrid" or phased retirement. Rather than stepping away completely, some individuals choose flexible arrangements — per diem work, part-time roles, consulting, or staying connected to their profession in a reduced capacity.

Karen's transition reflects this well. By remaining connected in a flexible role, she continues sharing her experience and compassion while enjoying greater freedom and balance in her personal life.

We've seen firsthand at Brookmeade how experienced professionals can continue contributing in meaningful ways while embracing retirement at their own pace. It's a reminder that retirement today isn't one-size-fits-all — it can be shaped around individual goals, lifestyle, and priorities. Those interested in learning more about flexible opportunities are always welcome to connect with our Human Resources team to explore options that align with their interests and availability.

The Importance of Staying Connected - One of the biggest transitions in retirement can be the shift in daily social interaction. Work often provides structure, community, and routine. When that changes, intentional connection becomes even more important. Communities like Brookmeade place strong emphasis on opportunities for social engagement, wellness programming, lifelong learning, and meaningful activities. For example, initiatives like our S.A.S.S. — Soup and Sandwich Social — held at the Pavilion bring residents and

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Balance: Your best protection against winter falls

By Center for Physical Therapy Staff

Winter conditions such as ice, snow, wet floors, bulky clothing, and reduced daylight increase the risk of slipping. Strong balance helps the body react quickly, while poor balance can turn a minor slip into a serious fall.

Why Balance Matters in Winter

- Helps the body respond quickly to sudden loss of footing
- Improves stability on icy or uneven surfaces
- Reduces fall risk despite unpredictable winter conditions

BODY KNOWLEDGE

Common Signs of Balance Issues

- Feeling unsteady while walking or using stairs
- Grabbing railings or furniture more often
- Avoiding outdoor walking during winter
- Fear of falling or loss of confidence

Who Can Benefit From Balance Training

- Older adults experiencing unsteadiness

- Individuals with muscle weakness or deconditioning
- People with difficulty walking or abnormal gait
- Those with dizziness, vertigo, or vestibular concerns

Benefits of a Balance Program

- Decreased risk of falls through improved stability and reaction time
- Increased strength and better posture
- Safer, smoother, and more efficient movement

- Improved confidence and independence

Personalized Care

- One-on-one evaluation to identify specific balance issues
- Customized, supervised exercises focused on safety and progress

For those in the Hyde Park area concerned about balance or fall risk, structured balance training programs are available locally at the Center for Physical Therapy to help improve stability, confidence, and safety throughout the winter. Visit centerforphysicaltherapy.com or call (845) 233-4960.

Call the Wappingers Falls office at 845-297-4789.

Abilities First announces new board appointments to strengthen leadership and community impact

The individuals and families served by Abilities First, Inc. and the Foundation for Abilities First NY across the Hudson Valley will benefit from strengthened leadership as both organizations welcome new members to their Boards of Directors. These appointments further enhance the expertise, vision, and community representation guiding Abilities First and its philanthropic arm.

Abilities First, Inc. has announced the appointment of Roland A. Bloomer, Esq., an experienced attorney and community leader, to its Board of Directors—expanding the organization’s capacity to support innovative, person-centered programs and services. Bloomer is a Principal and Partner at Johnson & Bloomer, LLP, with extensive experience in business, construction, real estate, and estate law, as well as prior service as Assistant County Attorney for Ulster County. “Abilities First’s mission of dignity, opportunity, and inclusion aligns deeply with my values,” said Bloomer. “I look forward to contributing my legal and business experience to support its important work.”

Joining the Foundation for Abilities First NY Board of Directors are Steven Domber, Jeff Breen, and Lu Delgado IV, each bringing professional insight and a shared commitment to advancing opportunity and inclusion.

Steven Domber is an Associate Real Estate Broker with Berkshire

Hathaway HomeServices Hudson Valley Properties and a founder and longtime leader of the firm. Steven’s involvement with Abilities First began after attending the Golf & Tennis Classic event and President’s Reception, where he connected with the mission. “Strong communities are built when everyone is given the opportunity to succeed,” said Domber. “I’m honored to support the Foundation for Abilities First and its meaningful work throughout the Hudson Valley.”

Jeff Breen is President and a licensed Insurance Broker at Ridgemont Inc. Insurance Agency, specializing in life, health, and employee benefits across New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. “Supporting individuals with developmental challenges and the families who care for them is work that truly matters,” said Breen. “I’m proud to contribute my experience to an organization making a real difference.”

Lu Delgado IV brings more than a decade of experience in construction management and business development and currently serves as a Senior Project Manager at Pike Construction, where he oversees complex projects across higher education, infrastructure, and community development sectors. “Abilities First represents long-term, community-driven impact,” said Delgado. “I’m honored to serve and help strengthen

programs that empower individuals and families.”

Dr. Jeffery Fox, President & CEO of Abilities First, welcomed the new board members, noting their collective impact. “Strong, engaged board leadership is essential to advancing our mission,” said Fox. “Each of these

leaders chose to invest their time and expertise in our mission because they believe in what’s possible when communities make room for everyone. Their commitment strengthens our ability to create opportunities that change lives.”



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Healthy Weight, Healthy Life: Helping Pets Stay Active, Fit, and Thriving



Dr. Joseph A. D'Afbraccio DVM

One of the most powerful ways pet owners can improve their companion's health, and extend their lifespan, is by maintaining a healthy body

weight. While we often associate weight with appearance, it is far more than cosmetic. Proper weight management directly impacts heart health, joint comfort, metabolism, and overall quality of life.

Studies estimate that more than half of dogs and cats in the United States are overweight or obese. Excess weight places strain on nearly every organ system and increases the risk of arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, respiratory compromise, and reduced lifespan. Fortunately, thoughtful nutrition and regular activity can dramatically improve both longevity and daily comfort.

Weight management is not about restriction. It is about balance, supporting the body in the way nature intended.

Nutrition: Feeding for Health, Not Just Satisfaction

A balanced, species-appropriate diet is the foundation of lifelong health. Commercial veterinary-recommended diets are carefully formulated to provide complete nutrition without excessive calories. However, even the best diet can lead to weight gain if portions are too large or treats are given excessively.

Portion control is critical. Measuring meals accurately ensures pets receive the calories they need, without gradual excess.

Treats are an important part of bonding and training but should represent no more than 10% of a pet's daily caloric intake. Healthier treat options include:

- Small pieces of carrots or green beans for dogs

WAGS TO WELLNESS



- Measured portions of their regular food used as rewards
- Veterinary-approved low-calorie treats
- Small amounts of freeze-dried meat treats for cats

Excessive table food should be avoided. Foods designed for human consumption often contain high levels of fat, salt, and preservatives that contribute to weight gain and long-term health risks. While sharing food may feel like an act of love, maintaining a healthy body condition is one of the most important ways to protect your pet's future well-being.

Walking: One of the Most Powerful Tools for Health

Walking is one of the simplest and most effective forms of exercise for dogs, and it benefits owners just as much. Walking is a low-impact activity that builds muscle, improves cardiovascular health, burns calories, and supports joint mobility without excessive strain.

Research in both veterinary and human medicine consistently shows that regular walking improves heart health, strengthens muscles, and supports healthy aging. Even moderate daily walking can reduce the risk of chronic disease.

For many dogs, two walks per day lasting 15 to 30 minutes can significantly improve fitness and weight management. Older dogs and those with joint disease benefit especially from gentle, consistent activity rather than intense bursts of exercise.

Walking also strengthens the human-animal bond and provides valuable mental stimulation through exposure to new environments, smells, and experiences.

Activity and Enrichment for Dogs

Beyond walking, dogs benefit from a variety of activities that promote both physical and mental engagement.

Healthy activity options include:

- Interactive play such as fetch or tug
- Puzzle feeders that require problem solving
- Structured training sessions
- Swimming, which provides excellent low-impact exercise
- Food-dispensing toys that encourage movement

Mental enrichment is equally important. Dogs are naturally curious animals that thrive on engagement and purpose.

Enrichment activities reduce boredom, prevent behavioral problems, and support emotional well-being.

Understanding Cats: Natural Hunters Living in Indoor Worlds

Cats have very different exercise and feeding needs than dogs. To understand feline weight management, it helps to understand their natural behavior.

Cats are obligate carnivores and instinctive hunters. In nature, cats do not eat one or two large meals per day. Instead, they engage in multiple small hunting sessions—stalking, chasing, pouncing, and capturing prey. These short bursts of activity are followed by rest and recovery.

Indoor cats often receive calorie-dense meals without the need to hunt. Without opportunities for physical and mental stimulation, their caloric intake can exceed their energy expenditure, leading to gradual weight gain.

Excess weight in cats increases the risk of:

- Diabetes
- Arthritis
- Liver disease
- Urinary tract disease
- Reduced grooming ability

Maintaining a healthy weight allows cats to move comfortably, groom properly, and remain active and engaged.

Feeding Cats in a Way That Supports Their Natural Instincts

One of the most effective ways to support feline health is to mimic natural feeding behavior.

Instead of providing unrestricted access to food, consider structured feeding approaches such as:

Multiple small meals: Feeding 3–4 smaller meals per day more closely reflects natural hunting patterns.

Puzzle feeders: These require cats to bat, roll, or manipulate objects to access food, encouraging both mental and physical activity.

Food hunts: Placing small portions of food in different locations encourages movement and exploration.

Portion control: Measuring food carefully prevents gradual overfeeding.

These strategies transform feeding from a passive activity into an engaging and beneficial part of daily life.

Encouraging Safe and Effective Activity for Cats

Cats are built for bursts of activity rather than sustained exercise. Short, engaging play sessions are ideal.

Healthy enrichment options include:

- Feather wand toys that simulate prey
- Laser pointers used safely and responsibly

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Cold feet: Winter woes or warning signs?

By Premier Medical Group

For many of us, the frigid conditions of winter can be tough to handle. But this year, freezing temperatures have made it downright difficult to spend long periods of time outdoors. And in case you've been wondering—this extreme weather is not our imagination.

According to historical weather data, the Northeast has been approaching almost record cold this winter, with wind chills dropping between 10 and 30 degrees below zero. And we're just not used to it. In fact, this period of bitter cold is among the longest stretches of frigid weather since the winter of 1961.

When this kind of intense weather lingers for days at a time, you might start to ask if your cold feet are just a seasonal nuisance—or a sign of something more serious.

When are cold feet normal? - When it's cold outside, it's normal for your feet and hands to get cold while your chest and torso stay warm. Why? It's the beautiful magic of our bodies protecting ourselves! When we're out in the cold air, the blood vessels in our extremities, our hands and feet, constrict, which enables warmth and blood flow to stay in the more important parts of our body, such as our heart and lungs.

And when you leave the cold air to enter a warmer area, you might also find that it takes longer than

other areas for your feet and hands to warm up. That's because your blood must circulate through your limbs and back into your extremities again, which takes time.

The most obvious sign of cold feet is pretty simple—your feet feel cold! But that's not the only thing you might notice. Some people also feel a mild, throbbing ache in their feet or toes. You might even see changes in skin color, with areas that look pale, red, blue, or purple. These symptoms are often quite normal when you're out in the cold. But they're not something you want to ignore. Frostbite and other cold-weather conditions can develop after spending too much time in freezing temperatures, so it's important to take precautions. If you plan to be outdoors for any length of time, take simple measures to protect yourself:

- Wear waterproof or water-resistant boots to keep your feet from getting wet
- Put on thick socks made of wool, cashmere, or nylon



PREMIER *medical group*

- Consider investing in toe warmers or battery-operated heated socks

- Stay active to keep blood circulation at a maximum

When should you be concerned about your cold feet? - It's worth noting that not all instances of cold feet are a reaction to the weather. If your feet are consistently cold and/or painful, consider talking to a foot doctor (podiatrist) to make sure you're not suffering from an underlying condition that causes poor blood flow.

Some common disorders that can cause cold feet include:

• **Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD).** This is a vascular condition where the arteries in your legs, pelvic area or arms become narrowed or blocked due to plaque buildup. This limits the blood flow to your feet and can lead to pain as well as cold feet. Some people with PAD also find that their feet become discolored. When caught early, PAD is treatable.

• **Raynaud's Syndrome.** Raynaud's syndrome is a disorder that affects the small blood vessels in your fingers and toes. During a Raynaud's attack, the blood vessels and capillaries in your fingers and toes tighten more than they should. As a result, toes and fingers often turn white or pale from lack of blood flow. Sometimes they may even turn blue or purplish from low oxygen levels, or red when the blood flow returns. By and large, these attacks are in response to cold temperatures or stress, and last about 15 minutes.

However, it's important to note

that there are two different forms of Reynaud's. The primary syndrome may be uncomfortable, but is not typically dangerous. The secondary form of the condition is in response to an underlying medical issue, and should be treated by a doctor.

• **Peripheral Neuropathy.** Peripheral nerves make up a network that connect your brain and spinal cord to your muscles, skin and internal organs. Damage to these nerves, called peripheral neuropathy, can interrupt communication between your brain and other parts of your body, causing muscle weakness, tingling, and pain in your arms, hands, legs and feet.

• **Hypothyroidism.** Also referred to as an under-active thyroid, hypothyroidism means that your thyroid doesn't release enough thyroid hormone. People who have this condition may find that they feel cold all over, including their feet.

• Other conditions such as anemia, alcoholism, high cholesterol, diabetes and various autoimmune diseases can also affect your circulation, which in turn can cause cold feet symptoms.

For those of us living in the Hudson Valley, winter will not be leaving us any time soon. But there are things we can all do to pamper our feet and keep them cozy and warm. Try wearing socks or slippers. Remember to stretch or move your feet. If you can, take steps to stop smoking because nicotine makes it harder for blood to reach your hands and feet.

And consider adding more iron, vitamin B12, and folate to your diet to improve circulation. Most importantly, if you think your cold feet might be a symptom of a bigger problem, call us.

You can schedule an appointment with Premier Medical Group's Podiatry Division at premiermedicalhv.com/ or reach us at 845-454-0630

Wags to Wellness continued from page 4

- Puzzle feeders and treat balls
- Cat trees and elevated climbing areas
- Window perches for environmental stimulation

Two to three short play sessions per day can significantly improve activity levels and calorie expenditure.

Vertical movement is particularly beneficial. Cats naturally climb to feel safe and observe their surroundings. Providing elevated spaces encourages natural movement and muscle development.

Mental stimulation is just as important as physical exercise. Cats that are mentally engaged are less likely to overeat out of boredom.

Small Changes Create Meaningful Health Improvements

Weight gain often occurs gradually, and weight loss should be gradual as well. Even modest reductions in weight can significantly improve comfort, mobility, and metabolic health.

Maintaining a healthy weight helps support:

- Improved joint comfort and mobility
- Reduced risk of diabetes and

chronic disease

- Improved cardiovascular health
- Increased lifespan
- Better quality of life

Regular veterinary visits allow for monitoring of body condition and individualized recommendations for nutrition and activity.

Supporting Lifelong Health Through Daily Habits

Our pets rely entirely on us to support their health. By providing balanced nutrition, limiting excessive treats, and encouraging regular activity and enrichment, we help them live longer, healthier, and happier lives.

Whether it is a daily walk with your dog or a short play session with your cat, these simple routines provide powerful health benefits, for both pets and their owners.

At Catskill Veterinary Services, we believe preventive care, including proper nutrition, weight management, and activity is one of the most important investments in your pet's long-term well-being. With thoughtful care and daily engagement, we can help ensure our companions remain healthy, active, and thriving for years to come.



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Jimmy learns to read - with the power of kindness

For many years I taught classes of children with emotional and learning disabilities. Jimmy was in one of these classes. He was nine years old and in fifth grade. He did not recognize all the letters of the alphabet, he had no knowledge of letter sounds, and he could not recognize or sound out words.

At nine years old, this little boy could not read. How did this happen? Was he just another child who fell through the cracks for the first five years of his education?

But Jimmy wanted to learn how to read, so we embarked on a specific program to help him learn. The first step was to reinforce his ability to write the alphabet and recognize the letters and sounds of each letter. We spent considerable time reviewing short vowel sounds using vowel cards I created for him. Long vowel sounds are easier because they say their own names.

We used a first grade phonics book to review and reinforce phonetic skills. These books were much easier than the books his classmates used, but this didn't matter to Jimmy. He didn't know that they were on a first grade level and he worked diligently to acquire

MAKING EDUCATION WORK with Diane Fulves

the skills he needed. He did not give up and as he progressed. I could see his smiles and happiness in every little success.

Jimmy's reading textbooks were the Merrill readers. They may be out of style now, but they worked for him. The stories were short, all about Nat, the fat cat, who was always getting into trouble. Jimmy loved these stories and they were easy for him to read. The simplicity of the readers did not cause him any embarrassment. He knew that he was beginning to remember words. He was improving slowly but surely and he was pleased with his progress.

One day Jimmy was standing with me in the front of the classroom reading a story in his workbook. It was about Nip, the bear, another little rascal who got into trouble. He read this story aloud and the whole class listened. When Jimmy finished reading, the entire class burst into applause Jimmy was reading and every child recognized this and

cheered for him. I have never forgotten that day and the joy on Jimmy's face.

The rest of the story

There is another part to this story, the part played by all of Jimmy's classmates. During the entire year, no one made Jimmy feel embarrassed or dumb because he was working on first-grade material. No one knew. The children encouraged him and made him feel proud of his achievements. He was their friend and an integral part of the class.

We can learn a lot from children. They know that kindness matters. At this time in our lives, when intolerance and anger seem to permeate our world, children learn from what they see and hear and how they are treated. They learn from the words we use toward them and the way we speak about others.

If Jimmy had been given the same academic material his classmates were given, he would have been

frustrated. His confidence, his motivation, his sense of self-worth would have been destroyed. If his classmates had derided him, he would have become an angry little boy. But Jimmy was surrounded with kindness and respect which paved the way for his willingness to persevere through every task he was given. He was taught the way he could learn - and now he could read.

We must never give up on our children. Remember, they have only been on this earth a short time. When we persevere to find the best way to help them, they will persevere, too. We must be willing to do whatever it takes to help them build character, and become the best they can be now and for the future. Their success is the only option!

Diane Fulves is an educator and advocate for children and parents. She is director of Empowering Our Parents, which offers information and support to parents. She is the director of Nurture the Spirit and Shakespeare Odyssey, programs that enrich children with the magic of the arts. For more information, please contact her at dee076@verizon.net.

Retirement continued from page 2

community seniors together in a relaxed setting that encourages hydration, nutrition, and social connection, all of which are essential to maintaining health and overall well-being.

Similarly, the Meadows Adult Day Health Care Program provides structured daytime support that promotes engagement, wellness monitoring, nutritious meals, and meaningful interaction while allowing individuals to remain active within their community. These types of connections support emotional health, cognitive vitality, and overall quality of life. And connection doesn't have to be formal — it can be as simple as regular visits with family, shared meals, community events, or participation in local organizations.

Redefining What “Active Aging” Means - Today's seniors are redefining retirement in powerful ways. Many continue consulting, volunteering, traveling, or pursuing new interests. Others focus on

wellness, creativity, or family roles that were previously limited by demanding schedules.

Active aging doesn't mean constant activity — it means intentional living. It's about choosing how you want to spend your time and investing in what brings meaning and joy.

This evolving perspective has helped reshape how communities like Brookmeade approach senior living — focusing not just on care, but on independence, engagement, and continued opportunity.

Planning Ahead Makes a Difference Thoughtful planning plays a major role in a positive retirement experience — not just financially, but socially and emotionally as well. Some helpful questions include:

- What activities bring fulfillment?
- How will social connections be maintained?
- What environments support

comfort, safety, and independence?

- How can wellness and engagement remain priorities?

Having these conversations early helps individuals and families feel more confident navigating transitions.

Community Matters - At Brookmeade, we see every day how community, engagement, and personalized support contribute to fulfilling later chapters of life. Whether through Arbor Ridge, independent living, Terraces, Assisted Living, Meadows Adult Day Healthcare Program, or Meadows At Brookmeade, outpatient rehabilitation and skilled nursing care, or any of our community initiatives, the focus is always on helping individuals live meaningful, connected lives.

Retirement isn't about stepping away from life — it's about stepping into it in a new way.

Looking Forward - Ultimately, retirement is deeply personal. Some

people embrace relaxation, others pursue new adventures, and many find a balance somewhere in between.

Karen Robinson's journey reminds us that retirement can be both a celebration of past contributions and an opportunity for continued growth. Her lifelong service — from the Air Force to decades of care-giving — reflects a commitment that doesn't simply stop; it evolves. And often, with greater flexibility and fewer constraints, this stage of life can be one of the most rewarding.

Brian Zeidan, LNHA, SPHR, is Administrator of The Brookmeade Community in Rhinebeck, New York, where he focuses on enhancing quality of life for older adults through person-centered care, community engagement, and strong human resources leadership. He holds a master's degree from New York University and a bachelor's degree from Harvard University.



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The surprising link between oral health and heart health



Dr. M. Zubair Jafar

By M. Zubair Jafar, MD

Most people think of brushing and flossing as habits that protect their teeth, but your mouth plays a

much bigger role in your overall health than many realize. Research continues to show a strong connection between oral health and cardiovascular health, making good dental care an important part of protecting your heart.

How oral health affects the heart - Your mouth is home to millions of bacteria. When oral hygiene slips, harmful bacteria can build up, leading to gum inflammation (gingivitis) or more serious gum disease (periodontitis). These conditions don't just affect your teeth; they can trigger inflammation throughout the body.

Chronic inflammation is a well-known contributor to heart

PATIENT FIRST

disease. Studies suggest that gum disease may increase the risk of:

- Heart attack
- Stroke
- Atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries)
- Worsening of existing heart conditions

Bacteria from infected gums can also enter the bloodstream, potentially contributing to plaque buildup in the arteries.

Who is most at risk - People with the following conditions may face a higher risk of heart complications related to poor oral health:

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Smoking history
- Family history of heart disease

For these individuals, consistent dental care is especially important.

Here are some simple steps to protect both your mouth and your heart.

1. Brush twice a day - Use fluoride toothpaste and brush for at least two minutes. This helps remove plaque and reduce inflammation.

2. Floss daily - Flossing removes bacteria and food particles from areas your toothbrush can't reach, a key step in preventing gum disease.

3. Keep up with dental checkups - Regular cleanings allow your dentist to catch early signs of gum disease before it becomes serious.

4. Don't ignore bleeding gums - Bleeding, swelling or tenderness can signal inflammation. Early treatment can prevent complications.

5. Quit smoking - Smoking increases the risk of gum disease and heart disease. Quitting benefits both immediately.

6. Manage chronic conditions - Conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure affect oral and heart health. Keeping them under control reduces risk.

7. Eat a heart-healthy diet - Foods rich in fiber, antioxidants and healthy fats support both gum health and cardiovascular health.

The bottom line - Your mouth is a window into your overall health and caring for it is one of the simplest ways to support your heart. By maintaining strong oral hygiene habits and staying on top of dental visits, you can lower inflammation, reduce your risk of heart disease and protect your long-term well-being.

M. Zubair Jafar, MD is a cardiologist with Nuvance Health, part of Northwell Health. For more information, visit nuvancehealth.org.

Why we keep going back to lighting candles



LIFE IS BETTER WITH CANDLES

With Sonya, the Candle Lady

more effective. The following scents have been known to promote the following well-being:

- Citrus – Helps you feel energized – light it in the morning to wake up or during exercise
- Fir Needle – Brings on memories of nature
- Lavender – Helps you sleep but blow out the candle when you begin to feel sleepy
- Peppermint – Reduces fatigue and uplifts you
- Vetiver – Grounds the body and mind
- Ylang-Ylang – Lowers the heart rate and helps you feel at peace

For those who practice the rituals of self-care, lighting a candle can be a symbolic way to let go of negative thoughts or to set a desired intention.

Home is where the candles are. They allow us to take a break and escape reality which is what we need.

Candle Care & Safety

Scented candles are safe if they are made with high-quality, non-toxic ingredients and are used according to the manufacturer's instructions. Always make sure that there are no curtains above or table cloths that can easily catch fire.

While we encourage the use of creative candle holders, always use one that is specifically designed for candle use. The holder should be heat resistant, sturdy, and large enough to contain any drips or melted wax.

Always place your candles on a stable, heat-resistant surface to avoid heat damage and prevent glass containers from breaking. Never leave unattended and keep away from children and pets. Never burn a candle for more than 4 hours and trim the wick to ¼ inch before lighting to promote proper flame height. Additionally, keep candles away from drafty areas to avoid flame flickering; pool debris and black marks from forming on sides of the candle holder.

About

Sonya, the Candle Lady established herself as a trusted source for soy and beeswax candles when she opened Ye Olde Candle & Gift Shoppe in 2015 at Pleasant Valley with late husband, Dominick and relocated to Eastdale Village in 2020.

Ye Olde Candle & Gift Shoppe transitioned in May of 2024 from storefront to focus on candle-making workshops; art galleries, local libraries, restaurants and schools. However, you can now

visit her new showroom suite; place orders through social media and Door Dash.

NEW – We are now offering candle-making classes at our showroom suite starting in March.

Friday – March 13 – 5:30PM to 7:30PM

Friday – March 27 – 5:30PM to 7:30PM

Friday – April 10 – 5:30PM to 7:30PM

Friday – April 24 – 5:30PM to 7:30PM

FREE Parking in Secure Lot in front of the Carriage House

The Carriage House at 42 Catharine Street, Suite C108 in Poughkeepsie.

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday: BY APPOINTMENT ONLY

Saturday, Sunday & Monday: Closed

To set up appointments to visit or to inquire about candle-making workshops, call (845) 818-6280

Email Address: candlehousegiftshoppe@gmail.com

Website Address: www.the-candle-lady.com

Wedding Invitations Website: candlehousegiftshoppe.carlsoncraft.com

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