



Patient Larry Cullen and his wife Judy observe Suzanne Graziano explain proper exercise options.

Lifestyle Changes Improve Joint Health

By Jean Amodea

Keeping our bones and joints healthy is easy by living and enjoying a balanced lifestyle which includes good nutrition and exercise, according to Suzanne Graziano, RN, MSN, ONC, NE-BC, CNAT Director of Orthopedics and The Brookdale Center for Healthy Aging and Rehabilitation.

She explained that the most common type of joint problems is associated with osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. In fact, osteoarthritis is the leading form of arthritis affecting 27 million Americans. Joint cartilage damage results in bone-on-bone friction and wear causing pain, stiffness and decreased range of motion to a joint. Most commonly affected joints are knees and hips. Rheumatoid arthritis is a systemic disease now affecting 1.3 million Americans. The body's immune system attacks joints and inflames the synovial fluid to our joints causing extreme pain and damage.

There are risk factors that we can't control such as our heredity, increasing age, previous injury to joints, or congenital issues such as insufficient early bone development.

However, we do have control over our lifestyle habits by consuming nutritious foods, participating in physical activity at least five times per week while avoiding repetitive motion or over-exercising, maintaining a healthy weight, quitting smoking and limiting alcohol consumption.

"Nutrition is the foundation of our health and 80% of our health is determined by our nutrition. Stay away from foods that could trigger inflammation such as fried foods, red meat, dairy products, all trans fat and foods that have additives or are processed," Graziano said.

The number one ingredient in many diet sodas and diet products is aspartame, an artificial chemical sweetener, she added. It destroys bone health and the synovial fluid that provides joints with the nutrients needed to work properly. Diet products should be avoided.

Healthy nutrition includes eating at least five servings of fruits and veggies each day. Any type of berries, avocados, papaya, pineapple, figs and greens (such as kale, spinach, and lettuce) provide nutrients for maintaining joint health.

We should also add to this list foods high in essential fatty acids, which include cold water fish such as salmon, nuts, cashews, almonds, nut butters and flax seed. If possible, try to consume foods that are natural, unprocessed and organic.

We should consume 8-10 glasses of water a day. Water is known as the chair for life. It's essential for cushioning lubricating and transporting nutrients to joints as well as removing toxins from our bodies.

Simple activity such as brisk walking 30 minutes per day is wonderful for our musculoskeletal system. Other exercises such as yoga, Pilates, water aerobics, and tai-chi can help strengthen

the core of our bodies. For those who have joint problems, we recommend talking to their health care providers and requesting prescriptions for physical therapy consults. Staying active is essential for joint health.

For more information about the orthopedic unit and rehabilitation services, call (239) 436-5342.

TIPS FOR KEEPING BONES AND JOINTS HEALTHY

- Exercise
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Nutrition
- Quit smoking
- Limit alcohol consumption

Renovated Neuroscience Unit offers the best in patient care

By Elizabeth Kellar

With the renovation of NCH Healthcare System's Six South Neuroscience Unit, patients in need of neurological nursing are sure to receive the most advanced care available in Southwest Florida.

The 22,000-square-foot unit, which opened Dec. 15, boasts 34 beds. Everything in the unit was designed with an eye to providing the highest-quality neurological care for Southwest Floridians.

Since neurology patients often experience physical challenges, patient safety was a key consideration, indicated Robin McCarl-Galbavy, NCH Director of Surgical Nursing, which includes the neuroscience unit.

One example of those safety measures is bed exit alarms that notify unit nurses if their patients attempt to leave their beds. Also, a number of rooms have in-room cameras to better monitor the movements of those neurology patients who might be in danger of falling. Even the shower stalls reflect a new, easy-entry concept.

"We wanted it designed for people with physical challenges—and with safety in mind," McCarl-Galbavy said.

Safety for the nurses was also important. Previously, nurses needed to work together to lift patients out of bed and maneuver them around the room. That activity could be uncomfortable for patients and physically harmful for the nurses. Now, four rooms have electronic slings located on ceiling tracks, making it a breeze to move patients of all mobility levels.



The newly renovated neuroscience unit reflects an Everglades theme in its décor and showcases the work of local artists.

But it's not just technology that distinguishes the new unit, McCarl-Galbavy explained. In designing the space, planners "mindfully created spaces that are warm and family-friendly," she said. Warm and friendly translates to small enclaves in-room and in the common areas where families can sit down and have a private moment. All of the rooms have chairs as well as sleeper sofas for overnight guests.

Aesthetic considerations were important, too. An Everglades theme is reflected in the unit's artwork, including landscape and wildlife photographs in the patient rooms.

"We've built this new unit for patients with neurological problems," McCarl-Galbavy said. "Our staff has special training in the care of all neurological patients, with advanced training for stroke victims."

For more information on NCH Neuroscience Unit, call (239) 436-6783.