Men: Feeling good, feeling strong, are you?

Your pants from college still fit (somewhat), you can do 10 push-ups without needing an atrial defibrillator, and your most recent physical exam — in 2002 — indicated a darn good specimen. In fact, you can’t remember the last time you needed to see your primary care doctor. Your health is that good. You got this.

Congratulations, you’ve become a statistic. Men are four times less likely to consult with a doctor than women, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Unfortunately, that means that health issues, both great and small, can creep up on men or suddenly strike with no warning. Many people aren’t aware how preventable or treatable, if caught early, these issues are. For example, testicular cancer is curable when caught and treated early, as are other forms of the disease.

“Men frequently avoid seeing health care providers unless they have an active problem,” says John Schmidt, D.O., a family practice physician. “However, many serious conditions such as colon cancer, depression, abdominal aortic aneurysm, diabetes, and hypertension can be detected earlier to avoid major complications.”

Connect with Your Doctor, Anywhere and Anytime with Lee TeleHealth

Got the sniffles? Maybe turned an ankle? That ear ache hurting more? You want to see your doctor, but you’re unable to leave work or you can’t find a sitter for the baby. Stay right where you are. You’re covered with care, convenience, and comfort — with Lee TeleHealth. Help is only a click away.

Lee TeleHealth is an innovative patient-centered medical service that connects your doctor and health care team using a smartphone, tablet, or computer with a web browser and camera.

“In a timely and secure manner, you can access your doctor for treatment consultation via video conferencing,” says Venkat Prasad, M.D., chief medical officer of Lee Physician Group. “Lee TeleHealth was designed for patients with limited mobility, time, or transportation options. Interactions are encrypted to protect privacy. Patients can expect the same high-quality medical care they get at our facilities.”

Dr. Prasad adds that for patients already in the Lee Health system, telehealth visits become part of their medical record. “For example, if a patient had a telehealth visit one day and the next day went to the hospital or emergency department, the treating doctor would have the patient’s latest care plan,” Dr. Prasad says. “The telehealth program strengthens our commitment to providing our patients with a continuum of care that improves patient experience, reduces costs and, most importantly, can lead to better health.”
Meat-Eater Gets His Health Back with a Plant-Based Diet

Chad Ferguson knows his plants. After all, he holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Turf and Turfgrass Management. In 2017, Chad really got to know plants after he joined his wife’s health insurance program. As part of the enrollment process, Chad submitted to a battery of tests that included a physical exam and blood draws performed at Cape Coral Hospital.

“Honestly, I was annoyed I had to take time away from work to do the tests,” Chad admits. “I thought it was a formality I wanted over with as soon as possible.”

This “formality” likely saved his life. Chad, 40 years old at the time, had his triglyceride level checked as part of a lipid test. The results shocked him.

Chad’s triglyceride level was 410. According to the National Cholesterol Education Program, normal triglyceride levels fall below 150 milligrams per deciliter.

The Cape Coral resident had no idea he was at increased risk for stroke, heart attack, and heart disease. People at 17 often don’t have symptoms of high triglyceride levels.

A self-described “Type A” personality, Chad for years has worked two jobs. During the day he’s a golf course superintendent. He also owns and operates a lawn and ornamental pest management company, as a side business.

“When I got the results, I thought, ‘I have a family, a wife, two kids, and I’ve had fun for so many years,’” Chad recalls. “I was eating bad food, drinking alcohol, working 60 hours a week. I knew I had to make a change. I had to preserve what I had left. The time had come.”

Chad met with a registered dietitian at Cape Coral Hospital who explained to him the benefits of quitting alcohol, exercising regularly, and following a healthy nutrition plan that incorporated a plant-based diet. “I’m the kind of guy who will take a bit of knowledge and run with it,” he says.

Run with it he did, literally. “I started running and exercising again,” Chad says. “During the next two years, I slowly incorporated a plant-based diet into my life. I’ve reset my taste buds because I used to eat meat all the time, chicken and steak. I’ve reprogrammed my mind.”

Chad began his transformation weighing 225 pounds. He’s almost 6 feet tall. Now, he maintains his weight between 175 and 180 pounds. “I wasn’t focused on losing the weight,” he says. “I wanted to educate myself about healthy eating, I stopped drinking alcohol. Now, nearly every meal I eat is plant-based. I’m all about nutrition, protein, fiber, and drinking plenty of water.”

Chad’s current triglyceride level is 63. “I hope people see in me an average person who had blinders on two years ago,” Chad says. “I’ve taken the information from the nutrition experts at the hospital to see the light. There are good food options out there that can lead to a better quality of life.”

Get Your Nutrition On and Feel the Benefits!

Lee Health Solutions provides nutrition counseling and weight management services through its outpatient nutrition program. The starter program includes:

- A one-hour nutrition consult with a registered diettian
- 30-minute follow-up appointments
- Extended hours - early morning and evening appointments
- Body composition analysis completed at each appointment
- Available at Cape Coral Hospital, Lee Memorial Hospital, Gulf Coast Medical Center, Health Park Medical Center, Lee Health Coconut Point, and an office location on New Brittany Boulevard in Fort Myers.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call Lee Health Solutions at 239-424-3120.
Turning to Tech: Virtual Reality Gives Children a Gateway to Better Healing

Strap on that headset and grab a controller: The new virtual reality (VR) program at Golisano Children’s Hospital of Southwest Florida helps young patients find relief from pain and stress.

Virtual reality can take users to worlds beyond their own, which is ideal for patients who have stayed awhile at the children’s hospital, says Shane Swartz, a patient technology specialist who spearheaded the development of the virtual reality program.

Virtual reality typically uses headsets, motion controllers, and goggles to simulate new and exciting environments. Users can enjoy exploring lifelike objects and playing games that develop their focus and concentration. Shane, an avid gamer, built the mobile virtual reality cart from scratch using a PlayStation 4, PlayStation VR setup, and a medical grade mobile TV cart.

“I built it to be mobile so I can visit patients who are unable to leave their hospital bed,” Shane says. “I can just wheel the setup right into their rooms.”

Shane says the virtual reality program involves more than just patients playing games like Beat Saber and Fruit Ninja. “The technology also allows me to provide patients with experiences like flying through Paris or seeing the world through the eyes of an eagle with a game called Eagle Flight,” he says. “If some patients are feeling more adventurous, I can place them underwater to swim with the dolphins or on the savannas of Africa to chase the gazelles. Usually, it’s only a matter of seconds before their faces light up and their hands reach out to touch the dolphins or pet the animals.”

Shane specifically uses virtual reality games to make sure patients stay active at the request of their physical or occupational therapists. “If I can get them up and moving around while having fun, that’s a win/win situation. Our goal within patient care is to incorporate therapeutic gaming and technology into the hospital to help our patients.”

Shane says patient technology experts like him communicate with clinical staff to generate success plans for patients. He works with the Child Life specialists at the hospital to identify patients who may benefit from the virtual reality program. He typically sees four to five patients each day, spending from a half hour to an hour with each.

“I’m very blessed to be in this position I’m in, and also to be one of the early pioneers of a position that is destined to succeed by providing exceptional patient care, all just by having fun via technology,” Shane says.
The Manly Art of Good Health

Over a 2-year period, men were half as likely as women to see the doctor, reports a CDC 2014 survey. In fact, men were more than twice as likely to go to the doctor not ever seeing a doctor or health professional. Some men fear diagnosis, or are uncomfortable with exams as prostate and rectal tests, or they believe in traditional views of masculinity that honor self-reliance and downplay or ignore their health care concerns and needs.

The first step to staying healthy is finding a doctor you trust. Check with friends and family for recommended doctors, or perform an internet search on doctors in your area. Technology not only has enabled easier ways to find health care providers and improved communication between doctors and patients, but also made exams such as prostate and rectal tests quicker and easier. For example, in the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test, a blood sample is taken so that the level of PSA in the blood can be measured. (PSA is a protein made by the prostate).

The point is, doctors and health researchers stress simplicity: They just need to take the time and learn to sit down and have a casual conversation with their doctor. The tests won’t all be done at once, and men can very easily—and confidentially—learn to open up.

Even if you feel healthy, Dr. Schmidt recommends regular tests and routine exams to keep you in peak health.

You don’t have to study for these exams, but making the grade is vital to your health:

Blood pressure check: It’s as easy as using the automatic cuff at the local drug store. Make sure the numbers are in balance to detect problems that could lead to a heart attack or stroke.

Weight assessment: A doctor will look at your body mass index, waist circumference, and risk factors for all kinds of conditions that weight can cause.

Prostate and testicle exam: It’s not always comfortable, but it’s essential to keep a regular watch on abnormal swelling, lumps, or other discomfort.

Skin check (melanoma, basal cell, squamous cell carcinomas): These tests are essential, but they take particular prominence in Southwest Florida with its year-round sunshine and warm temperatures.

Dr. Schmidt also recommends:

• Colonoscopy every 10 years between ages 50 and 75 (every 3-5 years if polyps are present)
• Abdominal aortic aneurysm screening for men aged 65-75 who have smoked
• Lipid screening in men age 40 and older
• HIV screening for all adolescents and adults ages 15-65, at least once
• Depression screening for adults age 18 and older when staff-assisted depression care supports are in place
• Diabetes screening for adults 40-70 years old who are overweight or obese

Dr. Prasad adds LeeTeleHealth also allows you to obtain medication refills, monitor any ongoing medical conditions with a nurse, and get answers to questions about your laboratory results or X-rays. Should your condition require additional diagnostic testing, your physician may advise a visit to Lee Convenient Care or Lee Physician Group clinic for additional testing.

“Prevention really is the best medicine.”

Dr. Prasad also recommends:

• Cold and flu
• Sinus infection
• Rash
• Pink eye
• Headaches
• Urinary tract infection
• Allergy
• Cough
• Sprains and strains
• Sore throat

Connect with Your Doctor, Anywhere and Anytime

“The program extends the reach of our health care team by providing on-demand health care coverage for common ailments. “The service not only lower health care costs but also studies have shown it improves health outcomes,” Dr. Prasad says. “Patients can use the telehealth program to avoid interrupting their work day to visit their doctor’s office. They can also use it to eliminate costly visits to an urgent care center or an emergency department. The program saves time and money.”

Dr. Prasad adds Lee TeleHealth also allows you to obtain medication refills, monitor any ongoing medical conditions with a nurse, and get answers to questions about your laboratory results or X-rays. Should your condition require additional diagnostic testing, your physician may advise a visit to Lee Convenient Care or Lee Physician Group clinic for additional testing.

“The program extends the reach of our health care team by providing the right care at the right place at the right time,” Dr. Prasad says.

For more information, visit leetelehealth.org.

Get started: For smartphones: In the Google Play or Apple app store, download Lee Telehealth or you can launch it from within the Lee Health app. Or, using a web browser, you can go to LeeTeleHealth.org.
Although Randy Ramos and Lillian Ramos have identical last names, they are not related by blood — but they are connected by it. Randy, 8, and Lillian, 7, were diagnosed with the same form of leukemia in 2017: acute lymphocytic leukemia (ALL), also called lymphoblastic or lymphoid, a type that accounts for most childhood leukemias. The other two main types of leukemia in children are acute myelogenous leukemia (AML) and chronic myelogenous leukemia (CML).

As part of their leukemia treatments, the children receive blood transfusions at Golisano Children’s Hospital of Southwest Florida.

“Leukemia is a type of blood cancer that begins in the bone marrow,” says pediatric hematology-oncology specialist Craig MacArthur, M.D., who treats both Randy and Lillian. “When a child has leukemia, the bone marrow produces white blood cells that don’t mature correctly. These immature cells reproduce themselves and crowd out the normal healthy cells. When this happens, a child experiences the symptoms of leukemia.”

Almost all patients with leukemia require a blood transfusion during their treatment. Susie Nystrom, director of Lee Health Blood Center, says the blood centers require about 2,000 units of blood a month.

“Blood has a relatively short shelf life of about 42 days, so we need to replenish it often,” she says. “Our blood is safe. We screen for the Zika virus, as well as infectious diseases. Donating is safe and it’s a good way to help the community.”

After Randy’s diagnosis, his mother, Jezabel Carida Lima brought him to Golisano Children’s Hospital four times a week for his blood transfusions. Now in remission, Randy goes once a week every two weeks or when his blood count is low.

“We are very grateful to the blood center, the doctors, and the nurses at Golisano Children’s Hospital,” Jezabel says. “They made us feel very welcome.”

She says Randy has had two more years of chemotherapy treatment, which she administers as a liquid to him once a week at their Cape Coral home.

Like Randy, Lillian is currently in remission. Her mother, Amanda Gardner, administers Lillian’s chemotherapy treatment as a pill once a week at their Fort Myers home.

“Randy, 8, and Lillian, 7, were diagnosed in 2017 with acute lymphocytic leukemia.”

Lillian and mom Amanda Gardner celebrate Lillian’s remission.

“Lillian started a Facebook page detailing her health care journey. To follow along, visit www.facebook.com/lillysleukemijourney

Visitors may give blood if they meet the following criteria:
- Weigh at least 115 pounds
- Age 17 or older, 16 with parental consent
- Are healthy and feel well
- First-time donors must have positive identification photo

The Lee Health Blood Centers supply blood to Cape Coral Hospital, Gulf Coast Medical Center, HealthPark Medical Center, Lee Memorial Hospital, Golisano Children’s Hospital, the Rehabilitation Hospital, the Regional Cancer Center, and Lee Health Coconut Point.

Let’s Go to the Ballpark for Our Celebration of Life

CenturyLink Hammond Stadium
14400 Six Mile Cypress Parkway
Fort Myers, FL 33912

June 8
4 p.m. Survivor Recognition at Twins Player Development Academy Auditorium
5 p.m. Stadium gates open
Pre-game events
5:30 p.m. Picnic dinner buffet on third-base terrace
6 p.m. Game begins vs. Jupiter Hammerheads

Space is limited to 200. Reply with your name, phone number, address, email, and the name of one guest to Debbie.Manee@LeeHealth.org or call 239-343-9557.

Additional guests of survivors may purchase game tickets at $7.50 each.

Sponsored by:
21st Century Oncology
Florida Cancer Specialists
Florida Gynecologic Oncology
Lee Health
Lee Health Military Support Program Offers Care and Comfort

Military families face unique challenges, as Kim Gaide knows well. Program manager of Community Affairs with Lee Health, Kim has two sons in the military. One is an Iraq war veteran and the other is an active Florida National Guard member.

In 2003, Kim founded the Lee Health Military Support Program to support the families of Lee Health employees stationed around the world. “We were getting calls from staff members whose spouses were deployed, which means a loss of income,” Kim recalls. “Our committee established relationships with Lee County Electric, Florida Power and Light, and Sprint telecommunications. We held fundraisers and bake sales to raise money for paying electric and telephone bills, and the costs of shipping our care boxes.”

In 2005, the program was expanded to include military active duty, families, and veterans in Lee County. “Our services, events, and advocacy programs help ensure that future generations of Americans will remember the sacrifices of our courageous military by supporting these men, women and their families,” Kim says.

The program helps recipients meet the challenges of military life in a variety of ways, such as:

- Caring for the family and maintain the household during moves
- Managing child care, schooling, and continuity of education issues
- Addressing economic insecurity due to employment and financial challenges
- Coping with the stress of long separations from the service member during deployments
- Caring for a wounded service member with a disabling physical or mental injury or illness

“Over the years, we have provided health benefits and job counseling, tents and sleeping bags, haircuts, and food to more than 200 active service members and veterans, 20 of whom were homeless,” Kim says. The program’s community outreach efforts include Military Appreciation Day, held on the first Saturday in November. The event provides local Gold Star and Blue Star families and veterans with opportunities for career enhancement, health clinic, basic services, goods, and resources in Lee County. “Over the years, we have provided health benefits and job counseling, tents and sleeping bags, haircuts, and food to more than 200 active service members and veterans, 20 of whom were homeless,” Kim says. “We also send monthly care packages to active duty, overseas military personnel. Many troops are living out of their backpacks and don’t have the convenience of a PX or a grocery store to purchase items.”

Since May 2003, the program has sent more than 85,000 pounds of care boxes to military personnel.

Care Packages: Helping Make Life a Little Easier for Our Troops

The military especially needs the following items:

- Personal hygiene and comfort products
- Wet wipes (travel size), deodorant (travel size), foot powder/foot cream
- Sun tan lotion
- Toothpaste and toothbrushes, lip balm
- Foods and snacks
- Meats in pouches (tuna, chicken, salami, beef jerky)
- Snack packs (fruit, pudding, cheese and crackers)
- Chewing gum, hard candies, jerky, granola bars, trail mix

The program also sends coupons to state-side military families and overseas personnel for use at a PX or an on-base store.

“Not only do we support our local troops on active duty deployment, we continue to care for them after they come home,” Kim says. “Our program helps connect returning veterans and their families with community resources that help with creating professional resumes, finding a job, securing VA benefits, paying a utility bill, obtaining a wheelchair, and other durable medical equipment.”

The program operates solely on donated services, products, volunteerism, and monetary contributions.

To learn more about how you can contribute to the Military Support Program:

- Visit Facebook.com and search ‘LMHS Military Support Program of Lee County, Florida’
- Go to LeeHealth.org/jobs/MilitarySupport.asp
- Call 239-343-2045
- Email: MilitarySupport@leehealth.org

Mycology

A recent news story says we are living in the age of the ‘Shroom Boom’ – an obsession with the healing properties of mushrooms, which are increasingly appearing as ingredients in drinks and beauty products. In fact, Grand View Research reports that “the mushroom market could hit $50 billion in the coming years.” This concentration and study on mushrooms and their benefits is called mycology.

Why all the fungi fuss?

Well, besides the fact that mushrooms just look cool, they are also known as a superfood because of their nutritional value. They contain no fat or cholesterol, low sodium and calories, and are packed with antioxidants and fiber that have anti-angiotensin properties – a fancy way to say that they decrease blood flow to developing tumors, according to Carrie Bloemers, a registered dietitian with Lee Health. Mushrooms may also help in the fight against heart disease, improve cholesterol, and reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes.

So adding more mushrooms to your diet can definitely be a plus.

LeeHealth.org
Safe Swimming Classes

In 2017, 51 children aged 15 and younger drowned in Florida, according to the USA Swimming Foundation. Eighty percent of the drownings involved children under the age of 5. Exercise specialist Emily Withington says families can stay safer around water by enrolling their children in learn-to-swim programs, such as those offered at the Healthy Life Center in Cape Coral and at Babcock Ranch.

“We offer three levels of swim instruction for kids 3 and older, depending on their swimming ability,” Emily says. “All 30-minute group classes stress water safety skills while teaching swim fundamentals. For children younger than 3, the Aquatots’ class puts parents in the water with their kids.”

Emily adds that adults can take private lessons from a certified swim instructor. “Whatever your age, swimming offers great benefits, including improving your functional ability and helping to ensure your safety around water, whether you’re in a pool, lake, river, or the ocean.”

Classes are starting now!
To learn more about the swim program and summer schedule at Healthy Life Center – Cape Coral, call 239-424-3220.

Healthy Life Center – Cape Coral

Water Aerobics
A low-impact activity, water aerobics is an ideal activity for anyone with arthritis, back problems, foot or leg injuries, and knee conditions. The buoyant effect of the water takes the pressure of a person’s weight off the joints, alleviating pain or discomfort people may feel when exercising.

“Water aerobics offers a great way to change up your workouts, too,” says Philippa (“Philly”) McMurrain, group exercise aquatics coordinator at Healthy Life Center – Cape Coral. “You may find yourself at a plateau in your current workout. You’re still exercising hard, but you’re not improving as much as when you first started. Change up your workout with water aerobics. The group classes are fun and a refreshing different way to exercise.”

Therapy Pool
“Our therapy pool is a hidden jewel,” Philly says. “There aren’t many warm water pools in Lee County.

“The therapy and lap pools use a salt-purification system instead of a traditional chlorine purification system. The salt is far gentler to your skin, hair, eyes, and swimsuit and provides an experience that’s more like swimming in a lake or ocean than a chlorinated pool.”

To provide therapeutic benefits the therapy pool is kept warmer than the lap pool, at 93 degrees. “The therapy pool is good for members who are managing arthritis, fibromyalgia or who are recovering from surgery or a serious injury that prevents them from participating in the weight-bearing exercise,” Philly says. “There are classes for people with Parkinson’s disease and multiple sclerosis, too.

“We’re very fortunate to have one of the few therapeutic pools in the area,” Philly adds.

Master’s Swim Program
Designed for swimmers at all levels, the Master’s Swim Program offers participants a sense of community, says Susan Kelly, a certified swim coach and triathlete. “In a typical class, you have one another, challenge each other, and celebrate breakthroughs. Many swimmers meet up for open water swims or triathlon associated training outside of class.

“The class features different lanes to match ability levels. In the fastest lane, swimmers will complete more volume, will do more difficult maneuvers like flip turns, butterfly stroke, circle swim, and swim with a focus on pace as well as form,” Susan says. “The beginner lane is for swimmers getting back into fitness as well as swimmers who are new to the four basic strokes of swimming. All swimmers will learn about new swim gear and participate in drills that add variety while improving swim technique and endurance.”

Classes are 5:30 a.m. to 6:30 a.m. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. For more information, contact Susan Kelly at 239-822-6507 or email activegiricoach@gmail.com.

Healthy Life Center – Babcock Ranch

Aqua Zumba Water Aerobics
Aqua Zumba combines the traditional aqua exercises with standard Zumba moves and music. “In Aqua Zumba, you perform large muscle movements while lifting the leg in the water,” Philly explains. “It also requires circling of hips and shoulders. Every step is challenging and helps tone your muscles. Because the water takes the pressure off joints, your body will feel great after each workout.”

Healthy Life Centers are dedicated to providing you a personal experience. Are you looking to get fit or improve your athletic performance? Perhaps you need help recovering from an illness or injury. Maybe you just want to change your lifestyle to feel happier and more energetic.

Healthy Life Center Locations

1 42880 Crescent Loop, Ste. 100
Babcock Ranch, FL 33982
239-343-3540

2 609 S.E. 13th Court
Fort Myers, FL 33901*
239-543-4980

3 3114 Cleveland Avenue
Polo Fields, FL 33901*
239-343-4980

4 23450 Via Coconut Point
Estero, FL 33450
239-468-0050

*Please note: Fitness facility programs vary by location.
Healthy Life Center—Coconut Point
23450 Via Coconut Point, Estero, FL 33935
For reservations call 239-468-0050

JUNE 2019

Healthy Life Center—Fort Myers
3141 Cleveland Ave.
Fort Myers, FL 33901
For reservations call 239-424-3210

Healthy Life Center—Babcock Ranch
42880 Crescent Loop, Suite 100
Babcock Ranch, FL 33982
For reservations, call 239-424-3210

For upcoming events, go to LeeHealth.org/HealthyLifeCenter.