

Letter from Franciscan Health

Hello!

The frosty weather has arrived, and while the coldest days lie ahead, we hope this issue of *Inspiring Women* brings warmth, joy and a reason to cozy up with a cup of coffee by the fire. We pray this issue is a comfort to you and a reprieve from your daily grind.

Dive into our feature article this winter with Lizzi Smith, a Paralympic swimmer who defies her congenital condition to make waves and break barriers. Lizzi's journey proves to others, and herself, that she's capable of more than she ever imagined.

To complement Lizzi's swim journey, we included "Dive In for Wellness," so you can discover how aquatic exercise benefits both mind and body at any age—perfect inspiration to suit up and enjoy the water yourself.

We're also covering some challenging topics surrounding the end and beginning of life's miracle. "Walking the Final Mile" offers honest insights to help ease the process of working through hospice decisions for yourself or a loved one. On the other side of life, "Navigating Postpartum" shares valuable guidance for the challenging yet precious months after childbirth.

The winter season brings with it unique woes as well, we've got you covered for those too. In staying resilient amidst cold and flu season, learn the difference between viral and bacterial infections to know when to treat and when to rest in our "Cold Season Showdown." In "Rest Assured," Dr. Alakhras helps us bring to light the essential role of sleep, especially as our immune systems work overtime. And for those struggling with Seasonal Affective Disorder, "Embracing the Light" provides tips on coping with winter's darkness.

To bring a bit of warmth to these chilly days, our recipes section, as always, brings soul-warming comfort, including a guide to making your own sourdough starter and baking a fresh loaf. Who doesn't love some warm, fresh bread?

On behalf of Franciscan Health, please enjoy this issue of *Inspiring Women*. Thank you for entrusting the health of your mind, body and spirit with us. We hope you find comfort, empowerment and inspiration in the pages to follow.











TABLE OF CONTENTS

UH	The Power of Possibility
	Everything is Possible for One Who Believes

O6 Cold Season Showdown
Viral vs. Bacterial Infections

O8 Ask an Expert: Oncology
Get Healthcare Advice From a Franciscan Expert

10 Embracing the Light
Overcoming Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

Swimming Against the Current

Making Waves & Breaking Barriers With Paralympist
Lizzi Smith

18 Inspiring Women Word Search
Cozy Up and Grab Your Pen!

Mastering Goal Setting
The SMART Approach

Walking the Final Mile
Honest Insight into Hospice Decisions

Crockpot™ Corn Chowder

A Creamy Blend of Sweet Corn, Hearty Potatoes &
Aromatic Herbs

 $\begin{array}{c} \text{How to Perform a Breast Exam on} \\ \textbf{25} \quad \text{Yourself} \\ \text{\textit{The First Line of Defense}} \end{array}$

26 Creating Your Own Sourdough Starter A Beginner's Guide

Dive In For Wellness

How Aquatic Exercise Boosts Mind & Body at
Every Age

30 Ask an Expert: Hospice & Palliative Care
Get Healthcare Advice From a Franciscan Expert

32 Navigating Postpartum
Understanding the Journey After Birth

Rest Assured
An Introduction to Sleep Studies & Medications



3 · INSPIRING WOMEN · Vol. 5, Issue 1



Isn't that a powerful statement?
It's like a gentle nudge from Jesus, reminding us of the incredible power of belief. This isn't just about believing in miracles; it's about believing in ourselves, in our dreams and in the journey God has laid out for us.

Think about a time when you were facing something that seemed impossible. It could be a personal challenge, a health scare or a goal that felt out of reach. Our faith can truly shine when we're standing at the edge of doubt and uncertainty.

Jesus' words are a reminder that when we believe—really believe—in the depths of our hearts, we open ourselves up to endless possibilities. It's not always about the outcome but the strength, resilience and courage we find within ourselves when we believe.

So, sisters, let's take a moment today to reflect on what we believe in. It could be healing, a restored relationship or the courage to take a new step in life. Whatever it is, let's hold onto our faith, knowing that with belief, anything is possible.

Remember, it's not about having all the answers or being free from doubt. It's about trusting that little voice that says, "Yes, you can." Let's encourage each other to nurture that voice, believe in our potential and walk confidently along the path of faith.

Believe in the beauty of your dreams, the strength of your spirit and the endless possibilities that faith brings because the Lord will provide.

Cold Season Showdown

Viral vs. Bacterial Infections

Ah, cold and flu season—that time of year when we all start to wonder if the sneeze we just heard from across the room is going to send us straight to bed. But what if that cough or sniffle isn't quite what you think? Understanding whether you're dealing with a viral or bacterial infection can save you some unnecessary doctor visits, and more importantly, it can save your immune system a little grief!

Let's break it down: viral infections are caused by—you guessed it— viruses, while bacterial infections are caused by bacteria. Well duh—right? But what does that actually mean in how we treat these different infections?

Viral Infections

Viral infections are caused by viruses, which are tiny invaders that need a host—like your body—to feed on and grow. Unlike bacteria, viruses can't survive on their own, so they latch onto your cells and start multiplying.

Examples of Viral Infections

Common colds, the flu and even COVID-19 are all examples of viral infections. Other familiar ones include chickenpox, measles and certain types of sore throats.

How to Treat Them

Unfortunately, antibiotics won't work here. Since viral infections need to run their course, the best treatment is often rest, fluids and over-the-counter medications to manage symptoms like congestion or a cough. Your immune system is your best defense against a virus, so supporting it with plenty of sleep, hydration and a healthy diet can help speed up recovery. In general, grandma's classic remedy of chicken noodle soup is the best treatment for viral infections.

Bacterial Infections

Bacterial infections are caused by bacteria, which are singlecelled organisms that can live independently and multiply quickly in the body. These infections can sometimes become more serious if left untreated.

Examples of Bacterial Infections

Strep throat, urinary tract infections (UTIs) and certain types of pneumonia or sinus infections are all caused by bacteria. Skin infections, like cellulitis, are also common bacterial infections.

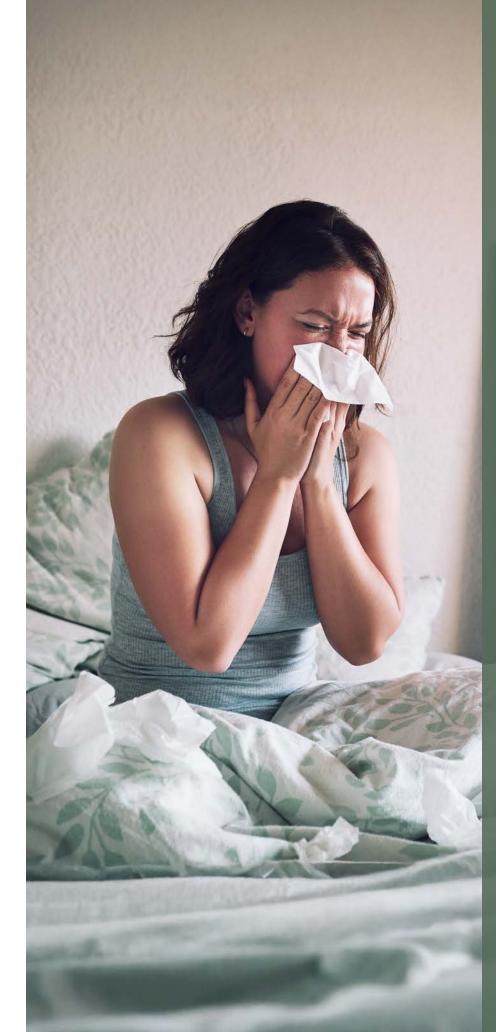
How to Treat Them

Antibiotics are the go-to treatment for bacterial infections, as they can kill the bacteria causing the issue. If your doctor prescribes antibiotics, it's important to take them exactly as directed—even if you start feeling better—to ensure the infection is fully cleared. Skipping doses, overdosing or stopping early can contribute to antibiotic resistance, making future infections harder to treat. Keep in mind, antibiotics won't help with viral infections, so only use them when prescribed by a healthcare provider for bacterial illnesses. Overusing antibiotics when they aren't necessary can reduce the effectiveness of the medicine and your immune system.

When in Doubt, See Your Doctor

If you're not sure what's causing your symptoms or if they're sticking around longer than expected, it's always best to consult with a healthcare provider. They can help figure out whether your illness is viral or bacterial and get you on the right track—whether that's with a prescription or just a reminder to take it easy.

Infections happen, but with a little know-how, you can navigate cold and flu season with confidence (and maybe even without the antibiotics).



Go-To Cold Remedies

When cold symptoms strike, a little comfort and care can go a long way in easing the aches and helping your body bounce back. Here are some classic remedies that will soothe and support your immune system, so you can feel a little better—one cozy sip or soothing nap at a time.

Chicken Soup

A classic comfort food, chicken soup helps keep you hydrated, eases congestion and offers a warm dose of nutrients to soothe your body.

Hot Tea

Ginger, lemon and a sweet touch of honey—this trio combines ginger's anti-inflammatory effects, honey's natural soothing qualities and lemon's vitamin C boost to calm symptoms and soothe a sore throat.

Salt Water Gargle

A quick gargle and spit with warm salt water can remove that uncomfortable "frog" in your throat. This will reduce throat inflammation and clear out mucus, offering quick relief for sore throats.

Vitamin C

A little extra vitamin C can support your immune system and help your body fight off a cold more effectively. You can get vitamin C from foods like citrus fruits, bell peppers and even leafy greens.

Probiotics

These "good bacteria" can strengthen your immune response and restore balance in your gut, helping your body bounce back. Probiotics are often found in fermented products like yogurt, kombucha, kimchi or sauerkraut. You can also get probiotic supplements if these aren't your style!

Sleep

Rest is crucial! Give your body the time it needs to repair and recover by getting plenty of uninterrupted sleep. Read more about the power of sleep in our article with Dr. Alakhras on page 35.

Oncology Ask an Expert —



Ajita Narayan, MD Hematology and Medical Oncology

Wish your doctor was on speed dial? We talked with some experts at Franciscan Health to answer your most pressing questions. This is what they had to say!

Find a Franciscan Doc



1. What are the most common signs and symptoms of breast cancer?

The most common symptom is a new lump or mass in the breast. It's important to pay attention to any changes, such as thickening of the breast tissue, swelling, skin dimpling or redness. Some women may also notice changes in the nipple, like discharge or inversion. Regular self-exams are helpful, but routine mammograms are the best way to detect breast cancer early, even before symptoms appear.

2. At what age should women start getting mammograms?

Most women should start getting annual mammograms at age 40. However, if you have a family history of breast cancer or other risk factors, you may need to start earlier. It's always a good idea to have a conversation with your doctor to create a personalized screening plan. Early detection can make a huge difference in treatment options and outcomes.

3. How can I lower my risk of developing breast cancer?

While some risk factors, like age and genetics, are beyond our control, there are lifestyle changes that can help reduce your risk. Maintaining a healthy weight, staying active, limiting alcohol intake and eating a balanced diet are all beneficial. If you have a higher genetic risk, your doctor may also discuss additional strategies, like enhanced screening or preventive medications. For many women, making small, positive changes in these areas can contribute to overall breast health.

4. I'm going through treatment right now. What advice would you give for managing the physical and emotional toll?

Breast cancer treatment can be challenging, both physically and emotionally. One of the most important things you can do is lean on your support system—whether it's family, friends or a support group. Keep an open line of communication with your care team so we can help manage side effects like fatigue or nausea and provide resources for mental health and spiritual support. Prioritize self-care in small ways, such as short walks, prayer, coloring, yoga or quiet time to nurture your mind, body and spirit.

VIRTUAL URGENT CARE FROM VIRTUALLY ANYWHERE!

When you can't make it in person, Franciscan ExpressCare virtual visits save you a trip by bringing urgent care to you! Speak with a Franciscan ExpressCare provider via video chat for minor illnesses and injuries for your next steps to finding relief.

EASTERN TIME ZONE HOURS:

Weekdays from 8AM to 8PM. Weekends 10AM to 6PM.

CENTRAL TIME ZONE HOURS:

Weekdays from 7AM to 7PM. Weekends 9AM to 5PM.



FranciscanExpressCare.org





What is Seasonal Affective Disorder?

SAD is a type of depression that's linked to the change in seasons, most often kicking in during the fall and winter months. With shorter daylight hours, our internal rhythms can get thrown off, leading to fatigue, irritability and feelings of hopelessness.

At its core, SAD is generally about light—or the lack of it. With less sunlight, our brains produce less serotonin (the feel-good chemical), which can lead to a drop in mood. Melatonin, which helps regulate sleep, can also go haywire, leaving us feeling sluggish and unmotivated. In essence, we can end up feeling like a plant kept in the dark, wilting without enough sunlight to thrive.

Lighten Up: Practical Tips to Combat SAD

Let There Be Light

Take advantage of natural sunlight whenever possible. Open your curtains and blinds first thing in the morning to let the light pour in, especially if you spend a lot of time indoors. Aim for a daylight walk outside, even if it's cloudy—the exposure to natural light can still have a positive impact on your mood. For a more structured solution, consider using a light therapy box. Designed to mimic natural sunlight, these devices can help regulate your body's internal rhythms, boosting mood and energy levels on the darkest days. Consult a Franciscan healthcare provider for guidance on using one effectively.

Move It. Move It

Exercise can be a powerful antidote to the winter blues. Physical activities like yoga, walking or dancing stimulate the release of endorphins, which are natural mood lifters. Find ways to stay active even when it's cold outside—bundle up for a brisk walk, try a fun indoor workout routine or join a gym class that you enjoy. Consider winterspecific activities like ice skating or sledding, which can help you stay engaged and energized by the season. Try to incorporate at least 20 to 30 minutes of movement into your day for maximum mood benefits.

Fuel Your Body, Feed Your Spirit

What you eat can directly impact how you feel, so focus on nourishing, wholesome foods. Omega-3-rich foods like salmon, walnuts and flaxseeds have been linked to better mood and brain health.



Additionally, try to limit sugary snacks and processed carbs, which can cause energy spikes and crashes, leaving you feeling more tired and irritable. A little treat here and there isn't bad, but that holiday diet can quickly get out of hand! Staying hydrated is also crucial, as dehydration can lead to fatigue and make it harder to stay motivated. Since winter means less exposure to sunlight, you may consider a vitamin D supplement. One of our Franciscan healthcare providers would be happy to talk to you about them.

Connect With Loved Ones

Don't underestimate the power of social connections. When feeling down, it's easy to withdraw, but staying connected with friends and family can make a huge difference in your mood. Make a point to schedule regular calls or get-togethers with loved ones, whether it's in person or virtually. Even a short chat, a laugh or a shared meal can help you feel more connected and supported. If you're looking to expand your social circle, consider joining a winter class or local group that interests you, like a book club, craft class or fitness group.

A Lighthearted Take on a Heavy Subject

It's easy to feel like you're stuck in a snowdrift when SAD sets in, but remember that winter, like all seasons, eventually passes. With a little effort and some sunlight (real or artificial), you can keep your spirits high even when the temperatures drop. And hey, if all else fails, there's always a Hallmark holiday movie to help warm things up.

If you or a loved one are experiencing severe symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder, Franciscan Health is here to help. Our experts can provide the care and support needed to get you back to feeling like yourself, no matter the time of year.



SCAN THE QR TO REQUEST AN APPOINTMENT WITH A FRANCISCAN HEALTH PROVIDER.



ising to Paralympic stardom, Lizzi Smith took the world by surprise—herself included. UAs a quiet girl from Muncie, Indiana, she never could have imagined that swimming would take her across the globe and onto podiums. Born with amniotic band syndrome, which left her without a left hand, Lizzi's story is not just about athletic achievement but about her relentless drive and refusal to let her disability define her. What makes Lizzi truly inspiring isn't her medals but her fierce determination to push past limits, proving that what makes you different can also make you extraordinary.

Lizzi was raised in a way that didn't even acknowledge her disability. "We never used the word 'disability' in my house," she says with a laugh. "I didn't even know it fell under that category." It wasn't until Lizzi went to school that she began to realize she was different. The stares and assumptions that she couldn't do certain things hit her all at once. "In gym class, they'd make me hula hoop while the other kids were jumping rope," she remembers. "But then I'd go home and jump rope for hours."

Discovering Power in the Pool

Lizzi's inner fire to prove everyone wrong began to burn from that early age. And when she discovered swimming at seven years old, that fire found the perfect outlet. "Swimming was the first place where I didn't feel like everyone was watching me," she recalls. "It was just me and the water. No one cared about my arm, and I could just focus on what my body could do." What her body could do, it turns out, was nothing short of remarkable.

CONTINUE READING ▶ ▶ ▶







While many swimmers begin formal training with the dream of Olympic medals between the ages of six and nine, Lizzi didn't even know the Paralympics existed until she was 12. She was watching the Disney Channel and saw a segment called "Check This Kid Out" that featured a swimmer with both legs amputated who was training for the Beijing Paralympics. "I was blown away," Lizzi says. "It was the first time I saw someone who looked like me doing something big. And it clicked—I realized I could do this."

What followed was a whirlwind. Lizzi dove into research, learning about Paralympic records, training schedules and the possibility of competing internationally. Before long, she was racing at her first Paralympic meet in Cincinnati. "They tracked me down after my first race and said, 'We need to get you classified. There's a meet in the Netherlands," she recalls, laughing. "I was starstruck—like, wait, I can travel the world doing this?"

The Road to Rio

Lizzi's rise in the swimming world was as fast as her times in the pool. She was 15 when she narrowly missed making Team USA for the 2012 London Paralympics by a few tenths of a second. Heartbroken but undeterred, she pushed harder. She made the U.S. National Team the following year and started competing internationally. By the time she made her first Paralympic Games in Rio in 2016, a then 20-year-old Lizzi was a force to be reckoned with.

But her road to success wasn't without its setbacks. At Rio, in her best event, the 100m butterfly, she missed a bronze medal by a mere hundredth of a second, finishing fourth. "It was absolutely devastating," she admits. "We always joke that fourth is the worst—you're so close, but you walk

away empty-handed." Yet, true to form, Lizzi didn't stay down for long. "We have a five-minute rule on our team," she explains. "You get five minutes to be as upset as you want—cry, scream, whatever you need to do. But then you come back, and you're ready to go."

And Lizzi returned, earning silver in the 4x100m freestyle relay and bronze in the 4x100m medley relay later that night. Despite the medals, it took her years to fully appreciate her success that night. "At the moment, I was so focused on that fourth-place finish that I brushed off the fact that I had just achieved a lifelong dream," she reflects. "But I've learned that medals aren't the whole story. The journey is the story."

Lizzi's journey is a rich one—one that's about more than just athletic achievements. Her story is about breaking barriers, pushing past what others think is possible and embracing the very thing that sets her apart. "For so long, I tried to hide my arm," she says. "But swimming changed that for me. When I walked out to the blocks at meets, I kind of loved seeing people's reactions—like, 'Oh, she's missing a hand. She can't be that fast.' And then I'd go out and beat them."

Finding Solace in the Water

This bold spirit has carried Lizzi through some of her most challenging moments. After the 2016 Paralympics, she took a year and a half off, feeling drained and unsure if she wanted to continue—a common sentiment from top-level athletes. "I was heartbroken by the sport," she admits. "It's demanding, and it doesn't always feel fair. You put in all this work, and sometimes the outcome just isn't what you hoped." During that break, Lizzi took time to explore new places and new passions.



She road-tripped across the U.S., spent time in San Francisco teaching swim lessons and began to see the sport from a new perspective. "I was teaching adults who were terrified of the water," she says. "Watching them face their fears reminded me how far I've come and how much swimming has

Lizzi continued to train and prepare a fresh outlook on the sport she held so dear, she slayed at her next competition at the 2019 World Para Swimming Championships. She took silver in the 4x100m freestyle and the 4x100m medley, then took bronze in the 100m butterfly and 100m backstroke. After that, she competed at the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics winning silver in the 100m butterfly. Then went on to win silver at the 2022 World Para Swimming Championships in the mixed 4x100m freestyle relay.

Her success came to an abrupt stop at the 2023 World Para Swimming Championships. During this race, she started feeling her anxiety creep in uncontrollably, and her performance unfortunately reflected that. She knew this was a sign that it was time to reevaluate her approach to swimming. It was time for another hiatus.

CONTINUE READING >>>



An Escape to the Ocean

Her second journey of self-discovery led her to Hawaii's vast, calming waters. After missing the podium in 2023, Lizzi had once again found herself at an impasse, feeling disconnected from the sport she loved. Yearning for a deeper relationship with the water—she set out to study the relationship that the Hawaiian locals have with it in the hopes of finding her own reconnection. "I didn't know quite how scared of open water I was until I did my first swim in Hawaii!" Lizzi admits. "While swimming in the ocean I noticed my body had a very similar physical reaction to swimming in open water as it did before racing. My heart would be racing, and I would get so tense with panic. I thought that if I could conquer my fear of the open water, that could also help me with my race anxiety."

Surrounded by the island's culture, where the ocean is sacred, Lizzi began to conquer her anxieties. Locals encouraged her to focus on her surroundings and trust the "aunties and uncles" swimming alongside her. In Hawaii, the terms "aunties and uncles" go beyond family ties and are used to show respect, affection and appreciation for elders in the community. This practice reflects Hawaii's strong sense of community, or "aloha spirit," where people are connected. "Aunties and uncles" serve as mentors, sharing wisdom and guidance with younger generations and helping to pass down important traditions and values.

"Knowing the 'aunties and uncles' were out there, I felt safe. Like if anything happened, they'd help."

This experience not only helped Lizzi regain her connection with the water, but it also reinforced the importance of community and trusting those who support you. This time away from competition provided Lizzi with a newfound connection to water, filling her with a renewed sense of purpose.

Mentoring the Next Generation of Champions

When she returned to the pool, she was more determined than ever—not just to win medals but to inspire others along the way. As a mentor and oceanic "auntie" to younger athletes, she's passionate about helping them navigate the challenges she faces. "I didn't know who to talk to when I felt different," she says. "So now I try to be that person for others. I want them to know it's okay to struggle, and it's okay to ask for help."

Today, Lizzi continues to train, compete and grow both in and out of the pool. At 28, she's already a Paralympic veteran, gearing up for what's next. Her recent experience in the 2024 Paris Paralympics was another reminder of the unpredictability of sports. She did not medal in Paris, but she did place sixth in the 100m butterfly and eighth in the 100m backstroke. Despite her disappointment, Lizzi didn't miss a beat in her selfconfidence. "Paris was hard." she admits. "I felt the pressure of the moment. The Paralympic movement has grown so much, and with that comes more eyes, more expectations." Through the challenges, Lizzi remains grounded. "At this point in my career, I've learned it's not about one race or medal. It's about the bigger picture."

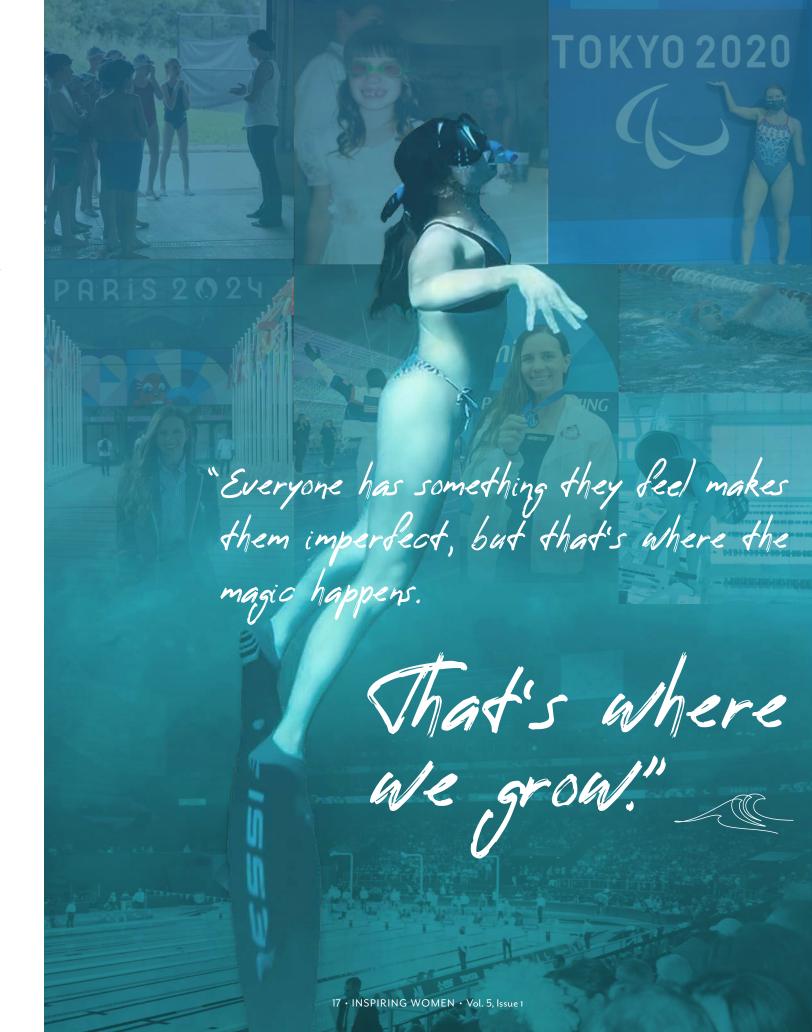
Creating a Legacy In & Out of the Pool

Off of the pool deck, Lizzi loves embracing her creative side by diving into graphic design, cake decorating and even punch needle embroidery. "I love creating things," she says with a smile. "If there is any opportunity to create something, I love it."

But her passion extends far beyond her hobbies. Lizzi is also deeply committed to advocating for the next generation of Paralympic athletes, working with brands to ensure greater visibility and opportunities. "The things that make us different are often the things that connect us the most," she reflects. "Everyone has something they feel makes them imperfect, but that's where the magic happens. That's where we grow."

As she reflects on her journey, Lizzi is clear on one thing: her younger self would be proud. "I think she'd think I'm pretty cool," she laughs. "I never lost that drive. I stayed hungry, and I didn't let go."

For Lizzi Smith, the road ahead is full of possibility. Whether in the pool, mentoring young athletes or speaking on stages about her story, she's committed to one thing—living life with purpose and using her platform to inspire others to embrace what makes them unique. And if her journey so far is any indication, there's no limit to what she'll do next.



Inspiring Women

Word Search

TRAYELL | ZEVBCKUOAZQONZRWG U F C G X W F Z U M P I S X D E P F P B O Z R A F Y E H S A Y | N W Q H R E S I R G S O Y F B T Q E G R I U M N V M R S E T H Q Z T N R W Z C S U U Y FAENIFIFTHMHCUYOQXENTRMAZ X Y V L S L R W Y D O | | | V R X G R W U N | T H MOATMEALSPOSSIBILITYTTIR LXBXPWLSLEEPPMMFFBBREADCC UZLESOFXIMHUXIVSELSFC|XPO TNEETGIFOYNBHCCEWSQTFUSZL M X G P M B E M S X E M I Q B E A I L Q U S S I Q G D T S I Q K B B T W S Q D H H G E M O Y C F D U K M H Q O A C R A D A D Q S P X D K I G H C G | N N F R U G U Y S X C G R R E S U L T S K C H P Q E E L Y Y Q Q R Z I D T W T G | R Z X O X P S G P L P | S D C | D D C V P E C E R E E | M C U S A H L B C A F V T U U O P O | R Y R P F Z E K X Q L N C R B E P V Z A U | U D S Q I R F Y E U N D B S O O C N Q N M T F M N C G A Y Z A Q Z L B F C W E E A QBFQQZSYBWGHYXWLDIGLHXC | G W B L P S L N U T V D E L B B P O S T P A R T U M M Q Y N E V G Z O N E I | U Y X Y W V D B L A S F K | I H C V S E A S O N A L P G B W Y D A Z X C O C S X O Q H A T F I H W B P A R A L Y M P I C | O ZMWPALLIATIVEDCYFEYOFCXVV

POWER
POSSIBILITY
VIRAL
BACTERIAL
SEASONAL

EXAM
SOURDOUGH
STARTER
BREAD
AQUATIC

PARALYMPIC SWIM

RESULTS
ACHIEVABLE
HOSPICE

ALYMPIC PALLIATIVE
SLEEP
SLTS BIRTH

BIRTH POSTPARTUM

Mastering Goal Setting

The **SMART** Approach

SMART is an acronym that helps us make goals that fit a framework. It's a framework used in goal setting to make goals more effective and actionable. Here's what it means to set a SMART goal:

S

Specific

A specific goal is well-defined and clear. It answers the questions of "what," "why" and "how."

To make your goal specific, consider:

- What is the exact outcome I want to achieve?
- Why is this goal important or significant?
- How will I accomplish this goal?



Measurable

A measurable goal is one that can be quantified or tracked. It involves using concrete criteria to gauge your progress.

To make your goal measurable, ask:

- How will I measure my progress or success?
- What metrics or indicators can I use to track my performance?



Achievable

An achievable goal is one that is realistic and attainable. It should challenge you but still be within the realm of possibility.

To determine if your goal is achievable, consider:

- Do I have the resources, skills and support needed to reach this goal?
- Is the goal reasonable given my current circumstances?



Relevant

A relevant goal aligns with your overall objectives and makes sense in the context of your life or work. It should be meaningful and worthwhile.

To ensure your goal is relevant, ask:

- Does this goal align with my long-term objectives and values?
- Will achieving this goal have a positive impact on my life or work?

T

Time-Bound

A time-bound goal has a specific timeframe or deadline. It provides a sense of urgency and helps you stay focused.

To make your goal time-bound, establish:

- When do I intend to achieve this goal?
- · What is the deadline or timeframe for completion?

Daily Goal Tracker

his goal sheet, jot down your objectives in the goals column. Each day, revisit your goals and
mark off the corresponding box if you've accomplished the goal for that day.

19 · INSPIRING WOMEN · Vol. 5, Issue 1



ALITTLE PROGRESS EACH DAY ADDS UP TO BIG RESULTS

Women



Deciding to move a loved one into hospice care is one of the toughest decisions you might ever have to make. It's not just about acknowledging the end is near—it's about facing your deepest fears, confronting loss before it fully arrives and managing day-to-day life in the shadow of grief. Hospice care, though essential, brings its own set of harsh realities and emotional complexities.

Understanding Hospice Care

Hospice care is fundamentally about comfort—not cures. It's for when a loved one's illness or condition has reached a point where treatment shifts from recovery to comfort. The team—comprised of healthcare professionals from various fields—aims to manage pain and symptoms

in a way that respects the dignity and wishes of the patient. It's about making the last chapter of life for your loved one as peaceful as possible, which is both a beautiful and profoundly sad responsibility.

Leaning on Realism & Practicality

While faith and hope can offer comfort, facing the reality of hospice care also requires a practical approach. Understanding what hospice involves, how it will affect daily life and what support systems are available is crucial. It's not just about spiritual comfort but about making informed, clear-eyed decisions during a turbulent time. Don't be afraid to ask questions and do your own research. Hospice physicians are excellent at being

22

realistic and factual while being sensitive. No question is too silly, too scary or too strange to ask. They have heard it all.

Emotionally Preparing Yourself

Stepping into this phase is emotionally taxing. You might feel a tumult of emotions: anger, sadness, helplessness—and yes—sometimes relief, which in turn might bring guilt. These feelings are intense and raw, and they demand to be felt. Coping means finding ways to manage these emotions without losing yourself:

• **Direct Communication**: Keep the lines of communication open with those around you. It's okay to say you're not okay.

• Seeking Support: Don't shy away from therapy or support groups. It's essential to have a safe space to express what you're going through.

 Maintaining Your Health: It might seem trivial to focus on your own needs during this time, but neglecting your health will only compound the stress.

Communicating With Your Family & Friends

Talking about hospice care with the other family and friends supporting your loved one is incredibly challenging but necessary. It's important to be as honest as possible about what's coming.

These conversations may be some of

the hardest you'll ever have. It is also a time to convey your commitment to their comfort and to ensure your loved one's wishes are honored to the end.

Now is the time to be upfront and honest about everything. If there is any family drama to bury, take this opportunity. Whether it is with the person on hospice or among other members, don't let it take away from what is important. Death brings finality to situations. You don't get back those moments to say you're sorry or express your true feelings. Encourage others to do the same, especially if you know there has been a conflict going on. Remember, this time should be focused on saying goodbye to your loved one, not the family drama. Apologize, move on and deal with the rest later

Community & Support

Relying on others can be difficult, especially when you're used to being the caretaker. However, community support—from neighbors, friends, religious groups or local organizations—is vital. They can offer not only emotional backing but also help with practical matters like meals, errands and respite care. Accepting help allows you to conserve your energy for what truly matters—spending quality time with your loved one.

Use their support to really take care of yourself. Your loved one could be on hospice for a few days, weeks or longer. When you have an opportunity for a free meal, take it. A hot shower? Yes, please. A chance to sleep in your own bed? Absolutely. Sometimes it is hard to step away, especially if you know passing is imminent. Use your best judgment and accept help when you can.

Choosing hospice care for a loved one is a profound act of bravery and realism. It means putting their comfort and dignity first, even as you face your own pain and exhaustion. This path is not easy. It's fraught with challenges and requires a resilience that you may not feel prepared for. But through honest conversations, practical preparations and community support, you can navigate this journey with strength and clarity.

Let's not sugarcoat this—it's tough, possibly one of the toughest things you'll ever do. But you're not alone, and it's okay to seek help, to break down, to have moments of stress, to have moments of relief and to find your own way of coping.

23 · INSPIRING WOMEN · Vol. 5, Issue 1



Crockpot[™] Corn Chowder

PREP: 10 minutes COOK: 6 hours SERVES: 6

Cozy up with our comforting corn chowder recipe, a creamy blend of sweet corn, hearty potatoes and aromatic herbs. This soul-warming soup is perfect for any season, offering a deliciously rich and satisfying meal that's sure to please.

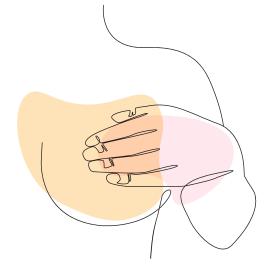
Ingredients

- 1 large onion, chopped
- · 3 celery stalks, chopped
- 1 potato, cubed
- 6 ears of corn, kernels removed
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 12 oz. evaporated milk
- 3 sprigs fresh thyme
- 1-2 bay leaves
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

- 1 | PLACE the onion, celery, potato, corn kernels, chicken broth and evaporated milk in a slow cooker. Season with thyme, bay leaf, salt and pepper.
- 2 COOK on low for 6 hours.
- **3 | TOP** with bacon, parsley, oyster crackers, etc. Serve and enjoy!

How to *Perform*a Breast Exam on Yourself



Self-examinations are quick and easy. They function as the first line of defense against things like breast cancer, so it's important to make sure you know what to look for!

Three Strategies for Your Monthly Breast Check:

1 In the Shower

When you shower, as you are bathing, use medium and firm pressure to feel for any changes or lumps in the breast and armpit area. Use your three middle fingers and press down on those areas with light, medium and then firm pressure. Feel for new lumps, thickened areas, hard knots or other noticeable changes to your breasts.

2 | In Front of a Mirror

Use a mirror to visually inspect your breasts. Stand in a relaxed, upright position with your arms at your sides. Look for changes in the size and shape—things like dimpling, swelling or other changes you notice on your skin, as well as checking for any changes to your nipples.

Now, put your arms on your hips and press firmly. This will help you flex your chest muscles. While you're flexing, inspect your breasts again—sometimes flexing like this can reveal changes and abnormalities before they grow too large. Remember that your breasts may not look completely symmetrical, that's okay! Few women have perfectly symmetrical breasts.

3 | Lying on Your Back

Lying down on your back allows your breast tissue to relax and spread evenly along your chest wall—providing a different angle to check for changes.

Start with your right breast. Place a pillow under your right shoulder and stretch your right arm straight behind your head. Now use your left hand to feel your right breast and arm pit area (similarly to how you would in the shower). Use light, medium and firm pressure across the whole breast and arm pit area to feel for changes like, lumps, thickenings, hard knots or other noticeable changes. Then repeat these steps on your left side.

While laying down you can also squeeze your nipples to check for abnormal discharge.

Common Things to Look Out For:

- · New lumps in the breast near the underarm
- · Nipple discharge (other than breast milk)
- · Change in the look or feel of the nipple
- · Consistent breast or nipple pain
- · Dimpling or puckering of breast skin
- · Red or swollen skin in the breast area

Early detection is key to fighting breast cancer.

Monthly self-checks help you spot changes and feel more in tune with your body. Most lumps (about 8 in 10) aren't cancerous and may result from normal menstrual cycles, but if you notice anything unusual, consult your doctor. They're here to help!



SCAN THE QR CODE TO FIND A FRANCISCAN HEALTH PROVIDER NEAR YOU.



Step-by-Step Guide to Creating a Sourdough Starter

You Will Need:

- 24 oz. jar (with a lid or plastic wrap)
- Whole wheat flour (for the initial start)
- Unbleached all-purpose flour or bread flour (for daily feedings)
- · Water

Day 1:

Combine a ½ cup of whole wheat flour and a ¼ cup of water in your jar. Mix until smooth, cover with plastic wrap or a lid and let it rest in a warm spot (about 75°F) for 24 hours.

Day 2:

Check for bubbles on the surface, which indicate fermentation. If you don't see any, don't worry; just let it rest for another 24 hours.

Day 3 to Day 7:

Each day, remove and discard half of the starter, then feed it with a ½ cup of all-purpose flour and a ¼ cup of water. Mix well, cover and let it rest in the same warm spot.

By day seven, your starter should have doubled in size, with plenty of bubbles throughout. The texture will be spongy and fluffy, and it should smell pleasant. If your starter isn't quite there yet, continue feeding it for a few more days until it is fully active.

How to Know When Your Starter is Ready

To test if your starter is ready, you can perform the "float test." Drop a teaspoon of the bubbly starter into a glass of water. If it floats, your starter is ready to use for baking.

Storing & Maintaining Your Sourdough Starter

If you plan to bake frequently, store your starter at room temperature and feed it 1 to 2 times a day. For less frequent baking, store it in the fridge and feed it once a week. When you're ready to bake, bring your starter back to room temperature and feed it as needed.

How to Make Sourdough Bread

Step 1: Mix the Dough Ingredients

- · 1 cup + 1 Tb. water
- ²/₃ cup active sourdough starter
- · 2 Tb. olive oil
- 4 cups bread flour (such as King Arthur)
- 1½ tsp. fine sea salt

Mix the ingredients until the flour is fully absorbed, and the dough feels rough and shaggy.

Step 2: Rest & Develop Gluten

Autolyse is the initial resting period that helps develop gluten without kneading. Strong gluten formation is essential for good bread. Allow the dough to rest for 30 minutes to 1 hour. This step is crucial for making the dough easier to work with and enhancing the bread's texture.

Step 3: Shaping & Proofing

After the initial rest, gently shape the dough however you'd like and let it proof (rise) until it has doubled in size. The proofing time will vary depending on the temperature of your environment.

Step 4: Baking

Preheat your oven to 450°F.
Transfer the dough to a preheated
Dutch oven and bake for 20
minutes with the lid on, then
remove the lid and bake for an
additional 20 to 25 minutes until
the crust is golden and crisp.

Get Ready for Bread

Creating a sourdough starter from scratch is a rewarding process that connects you to the age-old tradition of bread-making. With patience and a little care, you'll soon have a living culture that will produce beautiful, flavorful sourdough bread. So go ahead, take the plunge and start your sourdough journey today!

Dive In for Wellness

How Aquatic Exercise Boosts Mind & Body at Every Age



Aquatic exercise can be a refreshing powerhouse workout that benefits mind and body, especially as we age. Whether you're dipping into the pool for the first time or continuing a lifelong love of swimming, waterbased exercise offers a gentle, yet effective way to maintain health and wellness. Here's how aquatic exercise supports every part of us at every stage of life.

A Low-Impact Workout for Every Body

Unlike land-based exercises that can put stress on bones, joints and muscles, water's buoyancy makes exercise easier on the body, cushioning each movement. For older adults or anyone managing joint pain, arthritis or mobility challenges, this low-impact environment means less strain on the body, allowing you to move freely with reduced risk of injury. Aquatic exercises provide resistance without the jarring effects of gravity, making the pool a safe and accessible space for fitness at every age.

Another great benefit of aquatic exercise is its adaptability. Swimming, water aerobics and even simple water walking can all be modified to match various fitness levels. Local pools and community centers often offer classes tailored to specific groups, from beginner sessions for seniors to endurance training for seasoned swimmers. And because aquatic exercise can be adapted for different physical abilities, it's a safe way for individuals with disabilities to build strength, flexibility and confidence.

The Physical Benefits: Strength, Flexibility & Endurance

Aquatic workouts are incredibly effective at strengthening and toning muscles. Each movement is met with gentle resistance from the water, which builds muscle strength and improves balance—essential for older adults aiming to reduce the risk of falls. Swimming and other water exercises also support cardiovascular health, helping improve endurance and heart health without exhausting the body.

For those recovering from surgery, aquatic exercise often serves as an ideal entry point for rehabilitation. Simple movements like water walking or gentle stretching can enhance flexibility, increase range of motion and facilitate a safe return to fitness.

Aquatic Exercise & Mental Well-Being

Water has a calming, meditative effect, making aquatic exercise as good for the mind as it is for the body. The repetitive movements and the peaceful nature of the water promote relaxation, reduce anxiety and can even help alleviate symptoms of depression. Just being in water can lift spirits and leave participants feeling refreshed and re-energized.

Swimming has also been shown to support cognitive function and memory. Studies indicate that regular aerobic activity like swimming boosts blood flow to the brain, improving mental clarity and slowing cognitive decline as we age.

Benefits for Seniors: Maintaining Mobility & Independence

Maintaining independence is a top priority for older adults, and aquatic exercise can be a key factor in achieving that goal. Water-based workouts help seniors stay mobile and physically capable of daily tasks by enhancing core strength, balance and overall muscle tone. This, in turn, can reduce the likelihood of falls, a leading cause of injury among seniors.

Swimming has also been shown to have an antiinflammatory effect, which can relieve stiffness and discomfort associated with arthritis and similar conditions. For many older adults, pain relief alone is a powerful motivator to stay active, especially when coupled with the enjoyment and social connections found in aquatic classes.

Getting Started With Aquatic Exercise

Starting a new exercise routine can feel daunting, but the pool is an inviting place to begin. Look for classes at your local gym or community center, especially those aimed at beginners or seniors. Most facilities offer both individual and group classes, which means you can enjoy the social benefits of group exercise or the focused attention of one-on-one coaching.

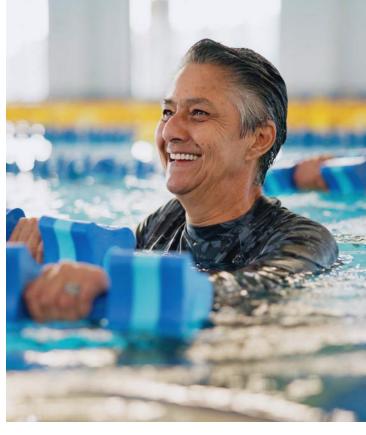
For newcomers, consider beginning with a few simple exercises:

- Water Walking Walking through water provides an excellent warm-up, gently strengthening the lower body without stress on the joints.
- Leg Lifts Standing near the pool wall, use water resistance to perform slow leg lifts, working on balance and stability.
- **Arm Curls** Using water weights, engage in arm curls to strengthen the upper body.

Dive In for Your Mind & Body

Swimming and aquatic exercise open a pathway to vibrant health and well-being. As one of the best low-impact exercises available, water workouts are suited to every age and fitness level, especially for seniors looking to stay active, maintain mobility and enjoy a deeper sense of peace and calm.

So take the plunge! Dive into wellness with a swim or water-based workout today. In every splash, you invest in a clearer mind and a stronger body.





Hospice & Palliative Care Ask an Expert



Beth Segal MSN, RN

Director of Clinical Services and Hospice-Franciscan Health Hospice and Community Palliative Care-WIR and Hobart (NIR) Healthy Living Center (HLC) and Virtual Health WIR

Wish your doctor was on speed dial? We talked with some experts at Franciscan Health to answer your most pressing questions. This is what they had to say!

Find a Franciscan Doc



1. What is the difference between hospice and palliative care?

Palliative care focuses on improving the quality of life for patients with serious illnesses, at any stage of their disease. It's about managing symptoms like pain, fatigue or anxiety while continuing other treatments. Hospice care, on the other hand, is a specialized type of palliative care for those who are nearing the end of life—typically when a patient is expected to have six months or less to live. Hospice is about comfort rather than cure, helping patients and their families make the most of their time together.

2. How can I tell when it's the right time to consider hospice care for a loved one?

Deciding when to transition to hospice care can be difficult. A good rule of thumb is to consider it when the focus shifts from curative treatments to comfort and quality of life. If your loved one is having more frequent hospitalizations, increased symptoms or a declining ability to complete daily activities, it may be time. Hospice is about honoring the patient's dignity and giving families support to navigate this stage with peace and compassion.

3. As a woman, I often feel like I'm balancing multiple roles. How can hospice and palliative care support caregivers like me?

Women are often the primary caregivers in families, and the emotional, physical and spiritual toll can be overwhelming. Hospice and palliative care teams include social workers and chaplains who can offer counseling and spiritual guidance to help you manage stress and avoid burnout. It's not just about the patient—we believe in caring for the whole family.

4. My loved one has strong faith. How does hospice care support their spiritual needs?

We highly value addressing spiritual and emotional needs alongside physical care. Our chaplains, who are trained in various faith traditions, can offer prayer, sacraments or simply a listening ear. The goal is to provide holistic care that respects the patient's values and strengthens them spiritually as they near the end of life.

LOOKING FOR HEALTH TIPS? SCAN AWAY!

Start living your healthiest life!
Tune in for expert interviews
with Franciscan Health providers,
follow the latest health news,
subscribe for free to *Inspiring*Women and pick up practical tips
for you and the family. Plus, sign
up for classes, events, support
groups and more.







PODCASTS



CLASSES, SUPPORT GROUPS & EVENTS



INSPIRING WOMEN

Connect with us:



@myfranciscan#myfranciscan#WeAreFranciscan



Navigating
Postpartum

Understanding the Journey After Birth

Becoming a mom is one of the biggest changes in a woman's life. Yes, there's the wonder and joy of a brandnew baby, but there's also an intense mix of emotions that don't always match the happy moments we are often led to hope for. For many women, the postpartum period can feel lonely, exhausting and overwhelming. And for some, postpartum depression (PPD) can add extra weight that makes it even harder to cope.

It's okay to talk about this. It's okay to say, "This is harder than I thought." When we talk openly, we can get the support we need and help others feel safe to do the same. So, let's look at what this journey can be like—from physical recovery and mental health challenges to supporting loved ones.

Healing Physically: Giving Your Body Time

After pregnancy and birth, your body needs time to recover, plain and simple. It doesn't matter how easy or hard your birth was—your body went through a lot. And while society often pressures us to "bounce back," the truth is that healing takes time and is different for everyone.



Rest as Much as Possible

We hear it all the time, "sleep when the baby sleeps." But when you're a new mom, that can feel impossible with everything piling up. The truth is, your body and mind need rest. It makes a difference when you get a chance to close your eyes or take a short nap, even if it's only a few minutes.

Feed Yourself Well

When looking after a newborn, it's hard to cook or eat full meals. Simple, healthy snacks you can grab, like fruit, nuts or yogurt, help keep your energy up. Lean on others to help if they can—those casseroles or prepped meals aren't just kind gestures—they're lifesavers.

Accept Help Freely

Accepting help doesn't mean you're failing; it means letting people love and support you. Take others up on offers to bring food, run errands or just hold the baby while you rest or shower.

The Emotional Rollercoaster: From "Baby **Blues**" to Postpartum Depression

In the first days and weeks after birth, many moms feel weepy, irritable or anxious. This is often called the "baby blues" and is usually due to hormonal shifts and lack of sleep. But for some, these feelings don't go away. If you feel sadness, hopelessness or numbness that lingers, it could be postpartum depression, which is more common than most of us realize.

Know the Signs

PPD is more than just feeling sad. It can look like guilt, frustration or even a strange detachment from your baby. Sometimes, moms describe feeling like they're on autopilot, unable to connect with others or themselves.

It's Not Your Fault

If you're going through PPD, it doesn't mean you're a bad mom or that you don't love your baby. PPD is a mental health condition often linked to hormone changes, sleep deprivation or personal history. The important thing to know? You're not to blame, and there's help.

Getting Help Makes a Difference

Talking to a counselor, joining a support group or even exploring medication can make a huge difference. Talking to someone trusted—a friend, therapist or spiritual leader—can be the first step in lifting some of the weight. Talk to your obstetrician if you are experiencing these symptoms.

CONTINUE READING ▶ ▶ ▶

Bonding with Your Baby: It's Okay If It's Not "Instant"

For some moms, connecting with a newborn feels immediate. For others, it takes time—and that's okay. The love you build day by day is real and lasting, even if it doesn't feel picture-perfect.

Small Moments Count

Notice the little things—how your baby's hand holds onto yours, the soft sounds they make while sleeping. These little moments are the building blocks of connection, and they add up.

Skin-to-Skin Time

Holding your baby close isn't just comforting; it actually helps regulate both of your stress levels. Holding your baby during feeds or simply resting together in quiet moments strengthens the bond.

Perfection Isn't the Goal

Don't feel pressured to "do it right." Love comes in all kinds of ways and timelines, and it's okay if your connection builds gradually. Many moms go through this, even if they don't talk about it.

Taking Care of Your Mind & Heart

It's hard to find time for yourself in the early weeks and months of being a new mom, but caring for your mental and emotional health is essential—not just for you but for your baby, too. Even small, simple acts of self-care can help renew your energy and strength.

Talk It Out

Talking to someone, whether a friend, partner or therapist, can make a huge difference. Being open and honest about what you're feeling can lighten the load and help you see you're not alone.

Find Small Moments for You

Even five minutes alone can be recharging. Try something simple, like a guick prayer, listening to a favorite song or taking a moment to stretch and breathe.

Turn to Your Faith

Many moms find that leaning on their faith brings peace in challenging times. A guiet prayer, a moment of gratitude or reading something uplifting can help you reconnect to your purpose and find strength.

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

Matthew 11:28 (NIV)

How to Support a Loved **One Going Through PPD**

If you have a friend, sister or wife going through postpartum depression, it can be hard to know what to say or do. But your support can be incredibly meaningful.

Listen, Don't Judge

Let them talk openly and listen without judgment. Sometimes, they might just need to vent or share their fears. Being there to listen can be more helpful than you know.

Offer Help Without Pushing

Offering specific help can make accepting it easier. Instead of saying, "Let me know if you need anything," try, "Can I bring over a meal this week?" or "I'll come by and watch the baby for an hour so you can rest."

Remind Them They're Not Alone

Let them know that what they're going through is normal and that it's okay to feel however they feel. Offer to help them find support if they need it, whether that's talking to a doctor or joining a support

Be Patient & Present

PPD can be a long road, and your friend may need ongoing support. Being there, reaching out and keeping in touch regularly can mean the world.

Embracing This New Season of Life

The postpartum journey is different for every mom, but you don't have to go it alone. Asking for help, letting others in and taking things day by day can make a difference. Remember, this season is a transition that takes time. The challenges you're facing now won't last forever, and there's a community of moms—both near and far—who are here to walk it with you.

You're not failing. You're navigating one of the hardest seasons of life. There's strength in sharing what you're going through and getting the support you deserve. With time, love and support, you'll find your way through. And through it all, God is with you, giving you the grace to keep going, even when the road feels long.

P.S. Don't compare yourself to other moms on social media. We all know that it is not real life. You are beautiful, loved and doing great, mama.



Why a Sleep Study?

A sleep study helps diagnose sleep disorders that may be standing between you and the rest your body craves. At Franciscan Health, we use sleep studies to monitor how your brain and body function while you sleep, allowing us to pinpoint potential sleep disruptions.

When left untreated, these disorders don't just lead to groggy mornings—they can also increase the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes and even mental health concerns like anxiety and depression. A sleep study provides valuable insights that help doctors recommend the right treatments to improve your sleep and overall health.

What Can a Sleep Study Do for Me?

By diagnosing sleep disorders, a sleep study can offer lifechanging benefits, including:

- Identifying Disorders: Sleep apnea, restless legs syndrome (RLS), insomnia and more
- · Improving Energy & Focus: More restful sleep leads to better concentration during the day
- Protecting Health: Reducing the risks of serious health conditions linked to poor sleep
- Boosting Mood: Proper sleep can improve your mental clarity, reduce stress and enhance your overall well-being

CONTINUE READING >>>

How Do I Know If I Need One?

While a bad night of sleep now and then is normal, ongoing symptoms may signal a sleep disorder. If you're experiencing any of the following, it's probably time to consider a sleep study:

- · Trouble falling or staying asleep
- Waking up with morning headaches
- · Excessive daytime drowsiness
- Loud snoring or gasping for air at night
- Night terrors or sleepwalking
- Crawling sensation in your legs or arms
- Excessive night sweats
- Falling asleep while driving or working

Common Sleep Disorders & What They Are

Sleep Apnea: A condition where breathing stops and starts during sleep, often leading to snoring, gasping for air or waking up frequently.

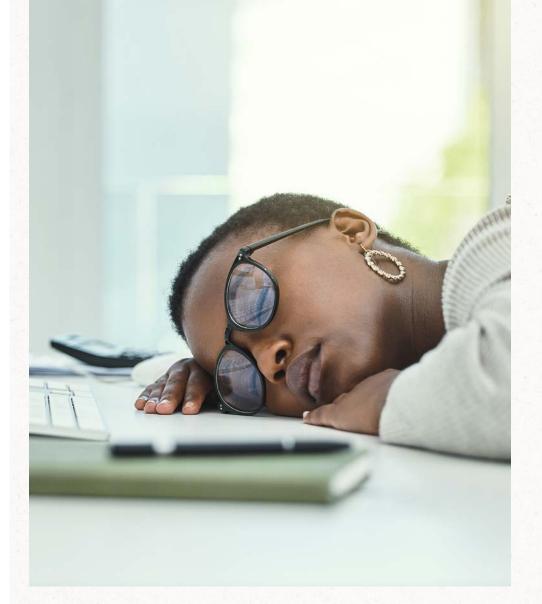
Insomnia: Difficulty falling or staying asleep, which can cause exhaustion, irritability and difficulty concentrating during the day.

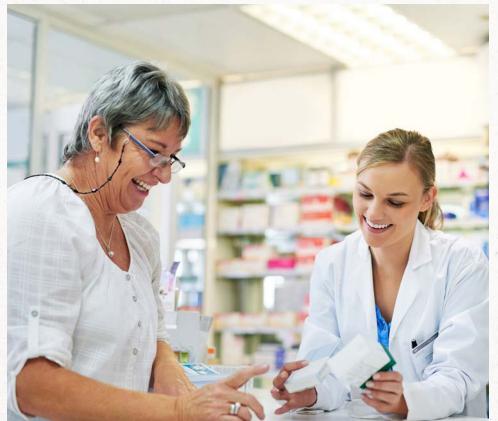
Restless Legs Syndrome (RLS): A tingling or crawling sensation in the legs that leads to an irresistible urge to move,

especially at night.

Narcolepsy: A neurological disorder that causes excessive daytime sleepiness, sudden sleep attacks and sometimes muscle weakness triggered by emotions.

Parasomnias: Abnormal behaviors during sleep, such as sleepwalking, night terrors or talking in your sleep.





Types of Sleep Studies

Depending on your symptoms, your doctor may recommend one of several types of sleep tests:

Polysomnography: An overnight study performed in a sleep lab, where technicians monitor your brain activity, breathing, heart rate and movements while you sleep.

At-Home Sleep Test: A simplified version of the sleep study, done in the comfort of your own bed, that measures breathing and oxygen levels.

Maintenance of Wakefulness

Test: Measures your ability to stay awake and alert during the day and is often used to assess sleepiness after treatments for disorders like sleep apnea.

Multiple Sleep Latency Test:

Tracks how quickly you fall asleep in a quiet, daytime environment to diagnose disorders like narcolepsy.

Sleep Medications: Should You Take Them?

When it comes to sleep, some people turn to medication for help. Sleep medications can be effective, but they're not a one-size-fits-all solution. Here's a quick rundown of common sleep medications and when they might be used:

Over-the-Counter Options:

Many people start with antihistamines, like diphenhydramine (Benadryl), which can make you drowsy. However, they can also lead to grogginess the next day and aren't meant for long-term use.

Prescription Sleep Aids:

Medications like zolpidem (Ambien) or eszopiclone (Lunesta) are often prescribed for short-term relief of insomnia. They help you fall asleep faster, but they can have side effects like sleepwalking or dependency, so they're typically used under careful medical supervision.

Melatonin Supplements:

Melatonin is a hormone your body naturally produces to regulate sleep, and supplements can help reset your internal clock. They're especially useful for people with jet lag or shift work sleep disorders.

Magnesium Supplements:

Magnesium is a mineral that plays a key role in many bodily functions, including muscle relaxation and calming the nervous system. It's been shown to help improve sleep quality, especially for people who struggle with insomnia or RLS.

Other Prescription Medications:

For some disorders like narcolepsy or RLS, doctors may prescribe medications that target the brain's neurotransmitters or manage muscle control, like gabapentin or dopamine agonists.

While medication can be helpful, it's essential to work with your doctor to determine the best course of action for your specific sleep disorder. Medications often work best when paired with lifestyle changes or treatments that address the root cause of the problem, such as sleep apnea or anxiety.

What to Expect During a Sleep Study

If your doctor recommends a sleep study, don't worry—it's a painless and non-invasive process. You'll either spend the night in a comfortable sleep lab or complete the test at home, depending on your needs.

For an in-lab sleep study (polysomnography), you'll sleep in a private, hotel-like room while technicians monitor your sleep using sensors placed on your body. These sensors track your brain waves, breathing, heart rate and movements throughout the night, allowing your doctor to analyze the data and recommend treatment.

If you opt for an at-home sleep test, you'll use similar equipment from the comfort of your own bed.

73%

of women ages 18-49 don't get sufficient rest.*

*Sufficient rest is defined as more than seven hours per night.

Sleep Well, Live Well

Getting enough restful sleep is vital for your health, mood and quality of life. If you're struggling to get the shut-eye your body needs, a sleep study might be the first step toward unlocking better rest for improved health.

Don't wait—talk to your doctor to see if a sleep study is right for you. Whether it's understanding your sleep patterns, diagnosing a disorder or finding the right treatment plan, taking this step can pave the way for better rest and better health. Get in touch with a Franciscan doctor now!



Scan to take our SleepAware assessment, and learn about your risk factors for developing sleep apnea.

BE INSPIRING. BE INSIGHTFUL. BE A NURSE.

Join a nursing program with flexible curriculum plans, and earn your nursing diploma and BSN degree in as little as two years.



Learn more about our programs at steson.org/academic-programs.

LOCATED IN LAFAYETTE, IN

St. Elizabeth
SCHOOL OF NURSING

enjoy this magazine?

Join Inspiring Women today.

It's FREE!

InspiringWomen.org



FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

@InspiringWomenFH