

Inspiring women

Full Throttle

The Heart, Hustle
& Humanity of
Kate Gundlach

Healthy Hosting
Gathering Around Food
That Feels Good



Skin Deep

Protecting the Skin
You're In

The Silent Load

How Mental Overwhelm
Manifests in the Body

Nature Therapy

Why Your Brain Loves
the Outdoors

Gut Check

Why Your Digestive
Health Matters

Letter *from* Franciscan Health

Dear Reader,

Summer has a way of filling our days quickly—longer evenings, fuller calendars and constant noise competing for our attention. And yet, beneath it all, there’s a quieter invitation: to slow down, to be present and to remember what matters most.

That invitation shapes this issue of *Inspiring Women*. Beginning with Psalm 46:10, our devotional, *Be Where Your Feet Are*, reminds us that stepping away from distraction can open space for deeper connection—with God and with the people we love.

In these pages, you’ll find simple ways to live that out—from screen-free summer evenings and shared meals to practical guidance on caring for your body, including skin protection and thoughtful insight into today’s healthcare conversations. You’ll also meet Kate Gundlach in *Full Throttle*, whose journey reflects perseverance, humility and a deep sense of calling.

We also make space for what often goes unseen—the mental and emotional load many women carry—and offer encouragement to practice self-compassion, grounded in the grace God gives so freely.

Our hope is that this issue meets you right where you are and gently encourages you to notice the beauty of the present moment.

On behalf of Franciscan Health, thank you for allowing us to walk alongside you in caring for your mind, body and spirit. May this summer bring you rest, renewal and a deeper awareness of God’s presence in your everyday life.

In faith and wellness,
The Franciscan Health Team



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Be Where Your Feet Are

“Be still, and know that I am God.”

Psalm 46:10

The day often begins before our feet even hit the floor. A quick glance at the phone. A scroll through emails, calendars, news alerts, text messages and social media. Before long, our minds are already racing ahead of us.

Technology has made many parts of life easier, but it has also made it harder to be fully present. Our attention becomes divided between the moment in front of us and the constant pull of what might be happening elsewhere.

Psalm 46:10 offers a gentle but powerful invitation: *“Be still, and know that I am God.”*

Stillness is not simply the absence of noise. It is the intentional choice to pause long enough to recognize that God is already present with us. Yet in a world filled with notifications and endless information, stillness can feel almost unfamiliar.

When we are always connected to our devices, we can slowly become disconnected from the people sitting beside us and even from the quiet voice of God within our hearts.

Being present is a spiritual practice.

It can be as simple as setting the phone aside during dinner and truly listening to your family’s stories. It can look like taking a quiet walk and noticing the warmth of the sun, the rhythm of your breathing and the steady reminder that God is near. It can mean beginning the morning with prayer before opening any apps or emails.

These small choices create space for something deeper. When we slow down, we begin to notice God’s presence woven through ordinary moments—a child’s laughter, a meaningful conversation with a friend or the calm that comes during a quiet prayer.

God rarely competes for our attention. Instead, He waits patiently for us to turn toward Him.

The more we practice being where our feet are, the more we discover that God is already there.

A simple practice for today:

Choose one part of your day to be fully present. Put your phone away. Take a slow breath. Offer a short prayer such as, “Lord, help me notice Your presence in this moment.”

In that stillness, you may find that what seemed like an ordinary moment becomes a sacred one. ●

Screen-Free Summer Evenings

Simple Ways to Unplug & Reconnect

Summer evenings seem to stretch time in the best way. The sun lingers a little longer, the air softens and the pace of the day begins to slow. It's the perfect setting to step away from screens, reconnect with the people right in front of us and be where our feet are.

Phones, tablets and televisions can easily fill the quiet spaces of our evenings. Yet those same quiet spaces are often where the most meaningful family moments happen—a conversation that drifts from laughter to something deeper, a shared meal prepared together or a simple walk as the sky turns gold and pink.

Setting aside screens doesn't have to be complicated. Sometimes the most memorable nights come from the simplest activities.

Start With a Backyard Game

Pull out a soccer ball, a frisbee or a set of lawn games. Children and adults alike benefit from moving their bodies after a day spent indoors. Laughter and a little friendly competition can quickly turn an ordinary evening into a favorite family memory.

Take a Sunset Walk

As the heat of the day fades, a walk around the neighborhood or through a nearby park offers a chance to slow down together. Leave the phones behind and notice the details—chirping crickets, warm summer air and the beauty of the sky as daylight fades.

Cook Something Together

Summer is a wonderful time to gather in the kitchen. Chop fresh vegetables, grill outside or try a simple seasonal recipe as a family. Cooking together not only teaches children practical skills but also invites conversation that might not happen at the dinner table alone. Check out the recipe on the next page for a fun family dinner idea!

Linger on the Porch

After dinner, bring a few chairs outside. Share a bowl of fruit or a simple dessert and talk about the day. Ask each family member one meaningful question—something as simple as “What made you smile today?” These small moments of listening and sharing build stronger connections over time.

When screens are set aside, we make room for something richer—presence. The kind of presence that allows families to truly see and hear one another.

Summer will pass more quickly than we expect. But evenings spent laughing in the yard, walking beneath a painted sky or talking long after dinner can leave a lasting imprint on the heart.

Tonight, consider putting the screens away just a little earlier. Step outside, take a deep breath and enjoy the gift of a summer evening together. ●

“This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

—Psalm 118:24

Campfire Dinner Packs

There's something special about cooking outdoors on a warm summer evening. The smell of the grill, the glow of a campfire and the simple joy of preparing food together can turn dinner into an experience rather than just another task at the end of the day.

Campfire dinner packs are an easy and fun way to involve the whole family. Each person builds their own foil packet with fresh ingredients, then places it on the grill or over the fire to cook. The result is a warm, flavorful meal with almost no cleanup. You can add whatever ingredients your family likes, but here are some ingredients to get you started.

PREP: 20 minutes

TOTAL TIME: 40 minutes

SERVES: 6

INGREDIENTS

- Heavy-duty aluminum foil
- 1-2 lbs meat of your choice (ground beef, 1" cubed chicken breast, sliced smoked sausage)
- 2-3 cups potatoes or sweet potatoes, diced
- 1 cup carrots, sliced
- 1 cup bell peppers, chopped
- ½ cup onions, sliced
- 1 cup zucchini or summer squash, sliced
- Olive oil
- Salt, pepper and your favorite seasoning blend
- Optional toppings: shredded cheese, fresh herbs or a spoonful of salsa



DIRECTIONS

- 1 | Preheat your grill to medium heat or prepare a campfire with steady coals.
- 2 | Tear off large sheets of foil, about 12 to 15 inches long.
- 3 | Place a small mound of potatoes and vegetables in the center of the foil.
- 4 | Add a portion of meat on top.
- 5 | Drizzle lightly with olive oil and sprinkle with salt, pepper and seasoning.
- 6 | Fold the foil over the ingredients and seal the edges tightly to create a packet.
- 7 | Place directly over your heat source and cook for about 20 to 25 minutes, turning halfway through.
- 8 | Carefully open the packets and add optional toppings like cheese or fresh herbs before serving.

Make It a Family Tradition

Set out bowls of ingredients and invite everyone to create their own combination. Kids especially enjoy choosing their vegetables and seasonings, which helps them feel more connected to the meal. While the packets cook, gather around the fire or relax together on the patio—share stories from the day, watch the sky change colors or take a quiet moment to say a simple prayer of gratitude for the food and time spent together. Often, the sweetest summer memories are made around the simplest meals. ●



ASK AN EXPERT

Dermatology

Daniel P Hekman, MD

Family Medicine, Dermatology
Franciscan Physician Network, Indianapolis

1. How much sun exposure is too much?

Short periods of unprotected sun exposure add up over time. Dermatologists recommend limiting direct sun exposure during peak hours, typically 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and consistently using protection, even on cloudy days.

2. Do I really need sunscreen every day, even if I'm not at the pool or beach?

Yes. Incidental sun exposure, like driving, walking or sitting near windows, can contribute to skin damage. Daily sunscreen users have been shown to have 24% less skin aging than those who used sunscreen only at their own discretion.

3. What SPF should I be using?

Look for a broad-spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 30. The American Academy of Dermatology recommends broad-spectrum (UVA and UVB protection) sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher for all skin types, with reapplication every two hours.

4. What are the warning signs of skin cancer I should watch for?

A helpful guide is the ABCDE rule: asymmetry, irregular borders, uneven color, diameter larger than 6 mm (about the size of a pencil eraser) and evolving size, shape or color. Also, look for the "ugly

duckling" sign, a mole that looks noticeably different from the others on your body. Anything that looks unusual or is changing should be evaluated by a dermatologist.

5. How often should I get my skin checked?

Most adults benefit from an annual skin exam, especially if they have risk factors like fair skin, a history of sunburns, numerous moles or a family history of skin cancer. The American Academy of Dermatology recommends regular self-exams, particularly for high-risk individuals.

6. Are tanning beds a safer alternative to the sun?

No. Tanning beds emit harmful UV radiation that the World Health Organization classifies as carcinogenic to humans. Indoor tanning is associated with a 27% increased risk of melanoma and a 40% increased risk of non-melanoma skin cancer, with even higher risks when exposure begins before age 35.

7. What's the best way to care for sunburned skin?

Cool the skin with lukewarm showers, apply gentle moisturizers like aloe and stay well hydrated. Avoid further sun exposure while healing. Severe burns, blistering or symptoms like fever should be evaluated by a medical professional.

8. Can diet really impact skin health?

Yes. A balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, healthy fats and adequate hydration supports overall skin health. Dietary antioxidants and vitamins found in whole foods may help protect the skin from UV-related damage.

9. Why does my skin seem more sensitive in the summer?

Heat, sweat, sun exposure and environmental allergens can all contribute to irritation. Heat and sun are among the most common triggers of skin sensitivity. Using gentle skin care products and keeping the skin clean and hydrated can help reduce sensitivity.

10. What is one simple habit that makes the biggest difference for long-term skin health?

Consistent sun protection. Daily sunscreen use, protective clothing and seeking shade are simple steps that significantly reduce long-term skin damage and skin cancer risk. An estimated 92% of melanoma cases are attributable to UV radiation exposure.



HAVE MORE QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR? SCAN THE QR CODE TO FIND A PROVIDER NEAR YOU.

7 TRUTHS EVERY WOMAN SHOULD KNOW

WALK IN TO YOUR APPOINTMENT PREPARED.

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Franciscan HEALTH

LOVE YOUR extraordinary LIFE

Skin Deep

Protecting the Skin You're In

By June, the light changes. Sandals come back out, afternoons stretch longer and the sun starts to feel less like a backdrop and more like a presence. We spend more time outside—walking, gardening, driving, sitting at ballfields, watching kids at the pool—and convincing ourselves that “just a little color” looks healthy.

But skin does not read summer the way we do. It reads exposure. It reads cumulative damage.

It remembers the burn at 16, the tanning bed before prom, the forgotten sunscreen at the lake and the years of quiet daily sun exposure that never felt urgent. Over time, that adds up. Most skin cancers are linked to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun or indoor tanning. That damage can lead to premature aging and, more seriously, skin cancer.

This is not a call to avoid the outdoors. It is a call to protect the body with more intention.

Your Skin Is Not Just a Surface

Your skin is your body's first line of defense—a living organ made up of layers that protect, regulate and respond to the world around you. When UV radiation damages skin cells, it can alter DNA and trigger abnormal growth, a process that often begins long before anything is visible. Protecting your skin is more than just preventing burns or wrinkles. It is about safeguarding vital, living tissue.

How Sun Damage Happens

Sunlight includes UVA and UVB rays. UVB is most associated with sunburn, while UVA penetrates more deeply and contributes to aging and long-term damage. Both play a role in skin cancer, which is why broad-spectrum sunscreen matters.

The challenge is that damage is often quiet. It happens while driving, sitting near a window, walking the dog or watching a game. It builds over time through ordinary life.

Indoor tanning adds to that risk. Tanning beds expose skin to concentrated UV radiation and increase the likelihood of skin cancer, including melanoma.

The Main Types of Skin Cancer

Skin cancer is not one condition, but a group of diseases. Basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma are the most common. They are often linked to sun exposure and are usually very treatable when caught early. They may appear as a sore that does not heal, a scaly patch or a raised or waxy bump.

Melanoma is less common than other types of skin cancer but is more serious because it is more likely to spread. It often appears as a changing or unusual spot—something that looks different from everything else. It may develop in less expected places, including

the scalp, under the nails, on the soles of the feet or between the toes, and it is not always dark. Some melanomas may be pink or skin-colored. Watch for the following warning signs:

- A mole that is changing in size, shape or color
- Uneven or irregular borders
- Multiple colors within one spot
- A lesion that stands out as the “one that doesn’t match” red

Who Is at Risk?

Anyone can develop skin cancer. Fair skin, light eyes, freckles, a history of sunburns, tanning bed use, many moles or a personal or family history of skin cancer can increase risk. But lower risk does not mean no risk. Skin cancer occurs across all skin tones, and delayed diagnosis can happen when women assume they are not vulnerable. The most helpful mindset is not fear—it is awareness.

What to Watch For

Pay attention to changes in your skin, including a spot that looks different from others, a mole that evolves over time, a sore that does not heal or a patch that itches, crusts or bleeds. These signs are often subtle, which is why regular skin checks are so important.

What a Skin Check Should Include

A quick glance is not enough. Check your entire body—face, scalp, ears, neck, chest, back, arms, hands, legs, feet, soles, between toes and under nails. Use mirrors. Ask for help when needed. This is not vanity. It is stewardship. If something changes, do not wait months to see what happens. Make the appointment.

Sun Protection Is More Than Sunscreen

Dermatologists recommend using a broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher. Reapply every two hours when outdoors and after swimming or sweating, and do not forget commonly missed areas such as the ears, neck, chest, hands, feet and your part line.

But sunscreen is only part of the picture:

- Seek shade during peak sun hours
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat
- Use sunglasses with UV protection
- Choose protective clothing when possible
- Be mindful near water and sand, which reflect UV rays

If Skin Cancer Is Found

Treatment depends on the type and stage. Many basal and squamous cell cancers are treated with minor procedures when caught early.

Melanoma may require more advanced care, including surgery or additional therapies. The good news is that treatment continues to improve, and early detection makes a significant difference.

A Gentle Reminder for the Season

For many women, skin is closely tied to appearance. We may first think about protecting it to slow signs of aging and later come to understand how important that care is for our overall health. This is not about dismissing beauty—it is about seeing it more fully. A tan is not always a sign of wellness.

Skin that is thoughtfully cared for, protected and regularly checked can reflect wisdom and respect for the body you have been given. As summer brings more time outdoors, enjoy the sunshine while remembering simple habits that support long-term health: wear a hat, reapply sunscreen, seek shade, skip the tanning bed and make time for regular skin checks. Your skin is living tissue, and it is worth caring for in every season. ●



Learn more about our dermatology services at Franciscan Health.

Your skin keeps a quiet record of how you've cared for yourself.

Full Throttle

The Heart, Hustle & Humanity of Kate Gundlach

By the time the engines fire in the IndyCar paddock, Kate Gundlach has already lived a full day in her head. She has anticipated scenarios, mapped out strategies, replayed possibilities and prepared for things that may never happen—but often do. Because in racing, you have to expect the unexpected.

Standing on the timing stand for Arrow McLaren, headset on, eyes fixed, she is one of three people responsible for the car's performance. The margin for error is razor-thin. The pressure is constant. And yet, if you met her outside of race day, you might never guess it.

She is warm and quick to laugh. She's the kind of person who will stop what she is doing to talk with you—whether you are a colleague, a young engineer or someone just passing by. She is also, very proudly, a dog mom.

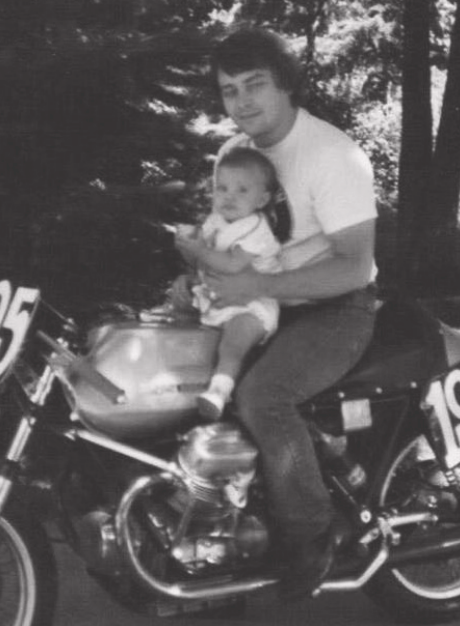
A Childhood Built on Engines—and Encouragement

Long before IndyCar, before engineering school and before cross-country moves for low-paying jobs, there was a little girl in Pittsburgh tagging along to the racetrack with her dad. He raced motorcycles—not the fastest ones, she'll tell you with a grin—but fast enough to spark something.

"I just loved being around it," she says.

She had a dirt bike of her own. She got her hands dirty. She learned early that she liked understanding how things worked, not just watching things work. Her family leaned creative. Art school would have made sense. Engineering did not. But curiosity has a way of nudging you in unexpected directions.

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Today, her dad still plays a role in her career—just in a different way. He proudly shares updates, photos and race moments online, enthusiastically tracking her journey like her biggest fan. At one point, her driver even joked, “Hey, I think your dad messaged me again.”

She laughs telling the story, but there is something grounding in it. No matter how high the stakes get, there is still a dad in the background cheering her on like she is that same kid at the track.

Choosing the Hard Path—On Purpose

Kate's path into racing was anything but polished. While her peers pursued stable internships, she chose an unpaid role at a small racing prep shop.

“I just wanted to be there,” she says.

She worked long days, studied at night and stretched herself thin trying to balance both. It was unsustainable, and she admits she nearly lost her academic footing. But she gained something else—experience, grit and a foot in the door.

That early decision set the tone for everything that followed. She kept choosing growth over comfort, even when it made life harder.

A Cross-Country Leap—and a Foot in the Door

After college, opportunities came slowly. Racing is a small world and a difficult one to break into. Her entry into the IndyCar scene came through a simple conversation. A friend mentioned an opening for a data engineer. She said yes.

Then she packed up and drove across the country to Indianapolis for a job that paid very little and demanded everything. But it got her in.

“That’s all I needed,” she says.

From there, she built her career piece by piece—learning systems, studying data and gradually understanding the bigger picture of how a race is won.

The Job She Wasn’t Ready For—Yet

For years, Kate worked her way up the engineering ladder, eventually becoming a performance engineer—a role just beneath race engineer which she proudly excelled at for six years. And then the opportunity came. She was offered the race engineer position. She said no. Not because she did not want it—but because she knew what it would require.

“I just wasn’t ready,” she says. It is a rare kind of honesty. In a culture that often rewards immediate advancement, she chose to pause.

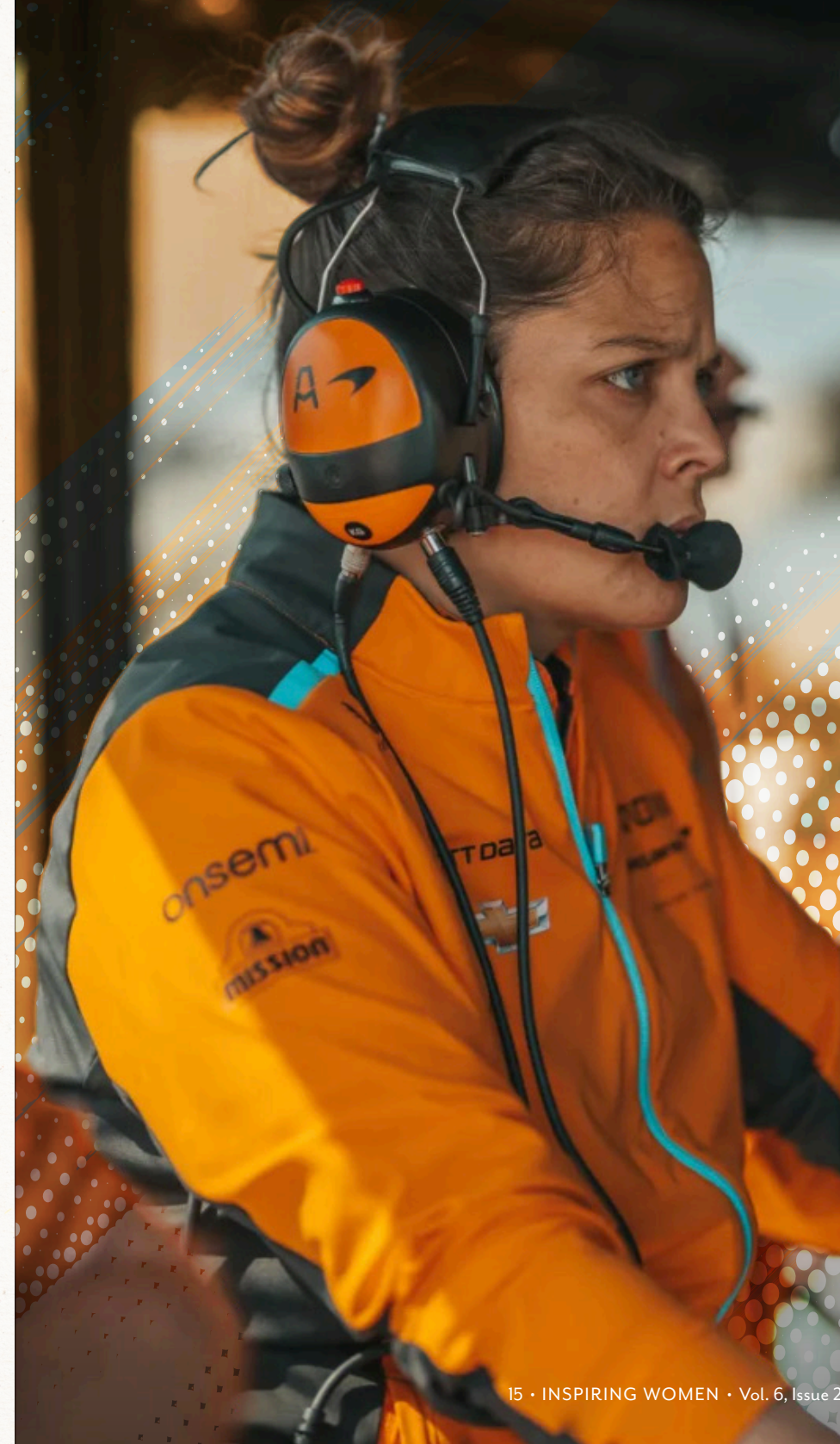
Over that next year, she did something equally rare—she prepared herself, not just professionally but personally. She committed to therapy, and she worked through the mental weight of the role she knew she would eventually carry.

When the offer came again the following year, she said yes. And even then, she admits, nothing fully prepares you. “It is unbelievably difficult,” she says.

Life in the Pressure Cooker

As a race engineer, Kate lives in a constant cycle of decision-making. She listens to driver feedback, analyzes performance data and works closely with her crew chief to adjust the car in real time. Within minutes, those decisions are tested on track.

“It’s a constant learning process, which I love.”



“You get immediate feedback,” she says. “They come back and say, ‘I love it’ or ‘I hate it.’” There is no waiting. No slow revision process. Just action and consequence.

The schedule only adds to the intensity. Race weekends stack back-to-back. Mondays are for debriefing. Tuesdays for rebuilding. Wednesdays—if she is lucky—offer a partial pause before traveling again. And still, she is thinking two races ahead.

The Emotional Roller Coaster

Some weekends feel like everything is clicking. She recalls one race where her driver delivered an incredible qualifying run—far exceeding expectations. It was a moment of pride, a glimpse of what the team was capable of. Then came a light brush with the wall.

What seemed minor caused extensive damage—broken components and a cracked engine, resulting in an engine change that held a penalty, dropping them back on the grid.

“That kind of stuff happens,” she says. “You just sit there like, how did that even happen?” It’s the nature of racing. Highs and lows come fast and often back-to-back. By the end of a race weekend, she says, her nervous system is completely spent. And yet, she keeps coming back for more.

Being Seen—for Better or Worse

For much of her career, Kate stood out simply by being one of the few women in the paddock. There were not many women in the paddock when she started and even fewer in engineering roles. Early on, she got used to the dynamic.

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"I kind of felt like I was dealing with a bunch of older brothers," she says.

Most of the time, that meant learning how to hold her own, speak up and earn respect through her work. And often, she found strong allies—teammates who backed her up without hesitation. But there were moments that reminded her just how different she looked in that space.

She remembers a supplier visiting the shop, taking one look at her and saying, almost incredulously, "A woman in racing? Really?" Before she even had to respond, the mechanics around her stepped in. They made it clear—quickly—that she belonged there.

"That part was nice," she says. "There are more allies than there are people who don't want you there." Still, those moments carry weight. Not always loud or confrontational but persistent in small ways. Comments, assumptions and the extra energy it takes to process them and move on, all take a toll.

"It's exhausting sometimes," she admits. At the same time, standing out comes with a unique kind of visibility. If she makes a mistake, people notice. If she succeeds, they notice that too. "As a woman in this industry, you're wearing your resume on your sleeve," she says.

Now, years into her career, that visibility has shifted. More women are entering the sport. More engineers are asking questions, looking for guidance and trying to find their place. And Kate makes space for them—because she remembers what it felt like to be the only one in the room.

The Softer Side of a Fast Life

Away from the track, Kate's world slows down just a little. She loves the outdoors. She practices Brazilian jiu-jitsu when time allows. She finds small ways to reconnect with herself between the chaos. And then there are her dogs. Four of them. "They're my babies," she says, smiling.

They sleep in her bed—even if it means she ends up in a tiny corner with a sore neck the next morning. She jokes that what she spends on vet bills and pet sitters could probably buy another house. She would not change a thing. "They're spoiled," she admits. "Very spoiled."

It is in those details that her life comes into full view—not just as an engineer but as a person who loves deeply, laughs easily and holds tightly to what matters most.

Staying Grounded

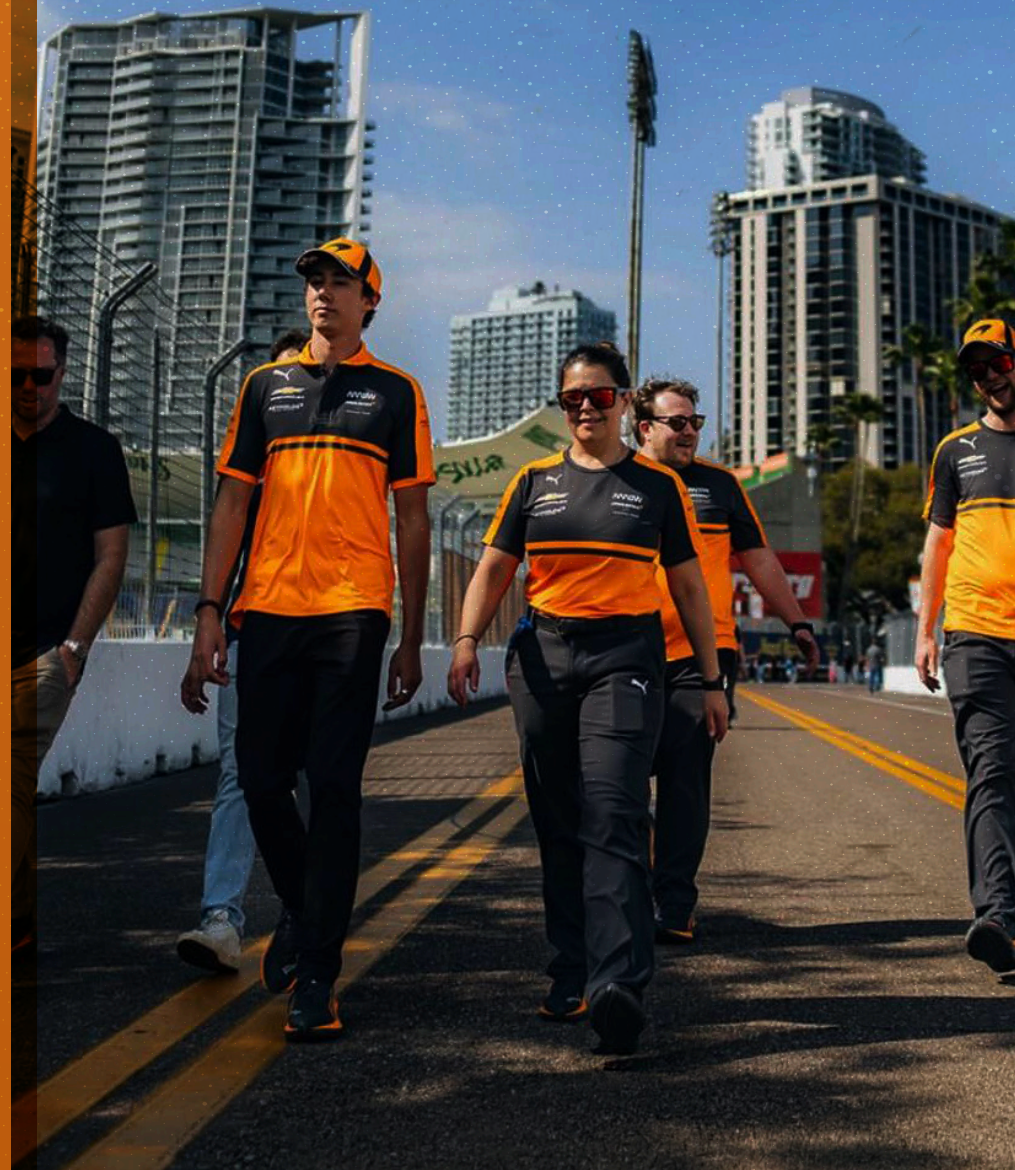
When things get overwhelming—and they often do—Kate leans on a phrase that started long before racing, long before engineering and long before the pressure of a timing stand.

"Here we go, Pittsburgh."

It is not something she picked up from a book or a coach. It came from home.

Growing up in a blue-collar Pittsburgh family, sports were part of life—Steelers, Penguins, the kind of loyalty that runs deep. Her stepmom would say it all the time, especially in chaotic moments, like loading kids into the car or getting everyone out the door. It was part rally cry, part reset button.

"Here we go, Pittsburgh!"



Now, Kate carries it with her into one of the most high-pressure environments in sports. She says it to herself. She says it to her driver. She even shares it with her team—especially when the tension is high and everything feels like it is stacking up at once.

It means: get focused. Lock in. Let's go. And underneath that, something quieter but just as important. It brings her back to who she is outside of racing. To family. To where she started. To a version of herself that existed long before job titles and expectations. In a sport that moves fast and demands constant output, that small phrase creates a moment of stillness, a breath and a reminder that no matter how intense things get, she knows exactly where her feet are planted. Here we go.

Making Space for the Next Generation

Gundlach does not present herself as someone who has everything figured out. In fact, she is quick to point out that she is still learning, still growing and still navigating the demands of her role. But she understands something just as important—what it means to be visible and what it means to be available.

Whether she is mentoring younger engineers on her team, supporting programs like Path to the Pits or speaking with students who are just beginning to imagine a future in racing, she makes a conscious effort to show up.

That includes opportunities like her involvement with STEM outreach through organizations such as The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, where she has shared her story with young students—many of whom are seeing someone like her working as a race engineer for the very first time.

There is no script for those moments and no polished speech, just honesty.

"I wasn't a straight-A student," she often tells them. "I struggled in college. You can still get here." That kind of transparency matters. It lowers the barrier. It replaces intimidation with possibility. And sometimes, the most meaningful impact happens in the smallest interactions.

"If someone stops me on the way to the bathroom, I give them the time of day," she says.

It sounds simple, but in a sport that can feel closed off and fast-moving, that openness can change how someone sees their own future. Because she remembers what it felt like to be on the outside—looking at the cars, the teams and the people behind closed doors, wondering if there was a place for her there. Now, she may be part of the reason someone else believes they have a place there, too.

A Life Built With Intention

There is nothing accidental about where Kate Gundlach is today. Every step, from unpaid internships to cross-country moves to turning down an opportunity she was not ready for, was part of the process.

Her story is not polished or perfect. It is layered, challenging and deeply human. And maybe that is what makes it so compelling. Because at its core, her journey reflects something many women understand:

You grow into the life you are meant to live—one brave decision at a time. ●

Straighten Up Fixing Tech Neck

If your neck has been feeling the effects of screen time lately, you are not alone. That dull ache, tight shoulders and limited movement? It has a name: tech neck.

Hours spent looking down at phones and screens put extra strain on your neck and upper back. The farther your head tilts forward, the harder those muscles have to work—often leading to stiffness, headaches and reduced mobility.

What Is Tech Neck?
Tech neck happens when your head stays tilted forward for long periods of time. This position overworks the neck and upper back while tightening the chest, creating a cycle of tension and discomfort.

The good news? Small, consistent changes can make a noticeable difference.

Stretch It Out, Sister
A few simple movements can help release tension and reset your posture. Move slowly, breathe naturally and stop if anything feels sharp.

Gently tilt your ear toward your shoulder to release the sides of your neck, holding briefly on each side. Follow with chin tucks—pulling your chin straight back—to strengthen the muscles that

support proper alignment. Roll your shoulders up, back and down to loosen tightness through the upper back, then reverse direction. Finish with a chest opener by clasping your hands behind you and lifting slightly to counteract that rounded, screen-time posture.

Posture Habits That Help
Stretching is just part of the equation—your daily habits matter, too. Bring your screen up to eye level instead of bending down. Take short breaks to stand and move. Let your shoulders relax away from your ears, and sit tall in a way that feels natural, not forced.

You do not need perfect posture—just better awareness throughout the day.

A Little Reality Check
We are not giving up our screens anytime soon. But we can stop letting our necks take the hit. Small shifts—stretching, sitting taller, taking breaks—can ease discomfort and help prevent bigger issues down the road. Consider it your gentle reminder to straighten up, in the most grace-filled way possible. ●



Our Daily Cup *Calm Your Caffeine*

For many women, the day does not truly begin until that first sip of coffee. It feels comforting, familiar and sometimes necessary. While caffeine can provide a welcome lift, it can also quietly influence sleep, mood and energy levels. The goal is not to give it up but to enjoy it with awareness.

What Caffeine Really Does
Caffeine is a natural stimulant that affects the brain and nervous system by blocking adenosine, the chemical that signals tiredness. This is why it helps you feel more alert. However, caffeine does not create true energy. It simply delays your body's fatigue signals, which may return later as a noticeable slump.

Finding Your Healthy Range
For most healthy adults, up to about 400 milligrams of caffeine per day is considered a safe upper range. This often equals three to four cups of coffee spread throughout the day. Sensitivity varies from person to person, and some women feel jittery or anxious with much less. During pregnancy, guidance is typically closer to 200 milligrams or less, though it is always best to follow your provider's recommendations.

The Hidden Sources
Caffeine is not limited to coffee. It can also be found in soda, iced tea, energy drinks and even chocolate. These smaller sources can add up quickly and push intake beyond a comfortable level without much notice. Being mindful of total daily caffeine can help prevent unwanted side effects.

Timing Matters
Because caffeine can stay in the body for five to seven hours, late-day consumption may interfere with sleep. A helpful rule of thumb is to stop caffeine about six to eight hours before bedtime. This simple shift can support better rest and more stable energy the next day.

Simple Ways to Sip Smarter
Small adjustments can make a meaningful difference. Drinking water first thing in the morning, eating before having coffee and focusing caffeine earlier in the day may help your body respond more gently. Slowing down to truly enjoy your cup rather than sipping continuously can also create a healthier rhythm.

A Gentle Reset
If your sleep feels disrupted or you find yourself relying on caffeine just to get through the day, it may be time to make small changes. Often, feeling better is not about eliminating habits but about adjusting them with intention.

There is something deeply comforting about holding a warm cup and pausing for a moment. Enjoy that ritual. At the same time, listen to your body—what it needs, what it tolerates and when it is asking for rest instead of another refill. Real energy is built gradually through daily care for your mind, body and spirit. ●



Inspiring Women Mini Games

Because sometimes the most productive thing you can do... is pause.

Between work, family and the never-ending to-do list, your brain rarely gets a moment to reset. These quick mini games are designed to give you a light mental break—just enough to refresh your focus and maybe even make you smile.

Sassy Sudoku

9			5	1		6		
2				9	4	8		
6			8				4	
8	2					1		
		5		8				
		6	7		5		8	
3					6		1	
			1	5		7		
						9	2	

Quick Brain Teaser

You have a 3-gallon jug and a 5-gallon jug. How can you measure exactly 4 gallons?

(Think step by step—you've got this.)

Riddle Me This

Give your brain a gentle stretch with these:

1. I speak without a mouth and hear without ears. I have no body, but I come alive with wind. What am I?
2. The more you take, the more you leave behind. What are they?
3. What has to be broken before you can use it?

Riddle Me This: 1. An echo, 2. Footsteps, 3. An egg

Brain Teaser: Fill the 5-gallon jug, pour into the 3-gallon jug (leaving 2). Empty the 3-gallon jug, transfer the 2 gallons into it. Fill the 5-gallon jug again, then pour into the 3-gallon jug until full—leaving exactly 4 gallons in the 5-gallon jug

Word Ladder: HAND, HARD, HARE, HIRE, FIRE | FOOL, POOL, POLL, POLE, PALE | FISH, WISH, WASH, CASH, CASE

9	8	4	5	1	3	6	7	2
2	5	7	6	9	4	8	3	1
6	1	3	8	7	2	5	4	9
8	3	2	4	6	9	1	5	7
7	4	5	2	8	1	3	9	6
1	9	6	7	3	5	2	8	4
3	7	8	9	2	6	4	1	5
4	2	9	1	5	8	7	6	3
5	6	1	3	4	7	9	2	8

GOOD THINGS
TAKE TIME

Inspiring
women

Healthy Hosting

*Gathering Around
Food That Feels Good*

Gatherings with friends and family often center around food. Appetizers are set out, drinks are poured and conversations begin to flow. These moments are meaningful and joyful, yet the foods we traditionally serve can sometimes leave guests feeling overly full, sluggish or ready to head home early.

Healthy hosting is not about removing comfort foods or creating a strict menu. Instead, it is about choosing options that feel satisfying and energizing. With thoughtful planning, it is possible to serve meals that are delicious, welcoming and nourishing—allowing guests to enjoy the time together without the heaviness that can follow.

Build a Table That Feels Fresh and Balanced

A well-rounded gathering table does not need to be complicated. Often, the most inviting spreads are the ones filled with color, texture and simple flavors. Fresh fruit, crisp vegetables and flavorful proteins naturally balance heartier favorites like pasta or bread. When guests have a variety of lighter and more substantial options, they tend to build plates that feel comfortable and satisfying rather than overwhelming.

Serving foods such as grilled chicken skewers, seasonal salads or whole-grain sides can help create that balance. Adding a yogurt-based dip or a platter of berries alongside traditional snacks brings freshness to the table while still honoring the comfort people enjoy at gatherings. A small sweet treat at the end—perhaps dark chocolate or fruit parfaits—can provide a sense of celebration without leaving everyone feeling weighed down.

Choose Foods That Fuel the Conversation

When meals are lighter and more nourishing, guests often feel more energized and present. Instead of the familiar post-meal slump, there is space for continued laughter, meaningful conversation and connection. Simple adjustments, like choosing roasted appetizers instead of fried ones or offering sparkling water with citrus and herbs, can make a noticeable difference in how people feel throughout the gathering.

Build-your-own meal stations, such as taco bowls or salad bars, also encourage guests to listen to their own hunger cues. This approach supports both variety and flexibility, allowing everyone to enjoy foods they love while maintaining steady energy. Including healthy fats like avocado or nuts helps create lasting fullness without heaviness.

Keep Hosting Simple and Low-Stress

Hosting feels most enjoyable when the focus stays on relationships rather than perfection. Preparing foods ahead of time or choosing dishes that can be served at room temperature allows the host to spend more time with guests and less time in the kitchen. A large serving board, a chilled salad or marinated proteins ready for the grill can turn meal preparation into a relaxed and manageable part of the day.

Simple menus often create the most memorable gatherings. When guests feel at ease and the host is able to sit down and participate, the atmosphere naturally becomes warmer and more inviting.

Add Movement to the Memory

Healthy hosting can extend beyond what is served on the plate. Gentle movement after eating supports digestion and keeps the gathering feeling lively. An evening walk through the neighborhood, a few rounds of lawn games or time spent tending a garden together can help guests reconnect with one another and with the outdoors.

These shared activities transform a meal into an experience. Fresh air, light movement and conversation can leave everyone feeling refreshed rather than tired—a small but meaningful shift that guests will remember.

Hosting Is an Act of Care

At its core, hosting is about creating a space where people feel welcomed, valued and cared for. Thoughtfully prepared meals that nourish the body can also nurture relationships and emotional well-being. Choosing foods that taste good and feel good is a quiet way of showing love.

Healthy hosting does not require elaborate recipes or perfect presentation. It simply invites us to be intentional—to offer nourishment, connection and time together that leaves both the heart and the body feeling full in the best way. ●

The Silent Load

How Mental Overwhelm Manifests in the Body

There is a kind of exhaustion that sleep does not fix. It lingers beneath the surface of busy days and full calendars—showing up as tension in the shoulders, a tightness in the chest or a constant sense of fatigue that never quite lifts. For many women, this is not simply physical tiredness. It is the weight of mental and emotional overload carried quietly, often without acknowledgment. The body, however, always keeps track.

When stress becomes chronic, it rarely stays confined to the mind. It begins to surface physically—through headaches, digestive issues, muscle pain, disrupted sleep or a weakened immune system. What feels like “just being tired” can actually be the body’s way of signaling that something deeper needs attention.

This connection is not imagined. It is part of how we are created—whole, integrated and deeply interconnected. The mind, body and spirit do not function separately. When one is strained, the others are affected. For women especially, the silent load can be heavy.

It is the constant mental checklist running in the background. The responsibility of caring for others while managing work, home and relationships. The pressure to meet expectations, both external and internal. Over time, this ongoing strain can lead to a state of overwhelm that feels difficult to name but impossible to ignore. And yet, many women continue to push through.

They normalize the fatigue. They dismiss the tension. They tell themselves it is “just a busy season.” While there is truth in life’s changing demands, there is also wisdom in paying attention to what the body is trying to say. Ignoring these signals often leads to deeper depletion.

But listening, really listening, can be the beginning of healing.

Recognizing the Signs

Mental overwhelm often appears in subtle ways before it becomes overwhelming. You may notice difficulty concentrating, increased irritability or a sense of being constantly “on edge.” Physically, it can look like tight muscles, frequent headaches, low energy or trouble sleeping. These are not signs of failure. They are invitations to pause and reassess.

Creating Space for Rest

Rest is more than sleep—it is a posture of allowing the body and mind to recover. This may include stepping away from constant noise, limiting unnecessary commitments or building small moments of quiet into the day. Even a few minutes of stillness can help regulate the nervous system and bring a sense of calm.

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

-Matthew 11:28

Caring for the Body Gently

When the body is under stress, it benefits from gentle, consistent care. Simple habits like nourishing meals, hydration and light movement can support physical recovery without adding more pressure. The goal is not to “push through” exhaustion but to respond to it with wisdom.

Tending to Emotional Health

Unprocessed emotions often contribute to the silent load. Naming what you are feeling, whether stress, grief, frustration or anxiety, can be a powerful step toward release. This may happen through conversation, journaling or speaking with a trusted counselor or healthcare professional. You are not meant to carry everything alone.

Returning to Spiritual Grounding

There is also comfort in remembering that your worth is not measured by productivity. In moments of overwhelm, returning to prayer can offer steadiness. Even a simple, honest prayer, “Lord, help me carry what feels too heavy today,” can create space for peace. Scripture reminds us that we are invited to bring our burdens to God, not hide them. This kind of surrender is not weakness. It is trust.

A Quieter, Steadier Way Forward

The silent load does not disappear overnight. But it can be lightened, one small step at a time. As you begin to care for both your mental and physical well-being, you may notice subtle changes such as less tension, clearer thinking and more consistent energy. These are signs that your body is responding to the care it has needed all along. True wellness is not about how much you can carry, it is about recognizing when something is too heavy and choosing, with courage and grace, to set it down. ●



Nature *Therapy*

Why Your Brain Loves the Outdoors

Step outside for a moment, not to rush to the next thing or to check your phone. Just to stand still long enough to notice the light, the air, the sound of leaves moving or birds calling in the distance.

It does not take long for something to shift. Your shoulders drop. Your breathing slows. Your thoughts feel a little less crowded. That is not your imagination. It is your body responding to something it was designed for.

Your Brain Was Made for This

Modern life keeps us indoors more than ever—under artificial light, surrounded by screens and moving quickly from one task to the next. While there are many benefits to that kind of efficiency, our brains were not formed in front of glowing rectangles. They were formed in creation.

Time outside has been shown to lower stress levels, improve mood and support clearer thinking. Even brief exposure to natural environments can help reduce mental fatigue and restore focus.

In other words, stepping outside is not a break from real life—it is a return to something essential.

Stress Softens in the Presence of Nature

When you spend time outdoors, your body begins to shift out of “go mode.” Heart rate slows. Muscles relax. Stress hormones begin to decrease. What felt overwhelming indoors often feels more manageable outside.

You may not even notice it happening right away. But a short walk, a few quiet minutes on the porch or time spent tending a garden can gently reset your nervous system.

It is not about escaping your responsibilities. It is about giving your body a chance to recover so you can return with more clarity and steadiness.

Clarity Comes More Easily

Have you ever stepped outside feeling mentally cluttered, only to come back with a clearer head?

Nature has a way of quieting the noise.

Without constant notifications and distractions, your mind has space to process, reflect and rest. Creativity often returns. Decisions feel less tangled. Problems that once felt urgent may begin to feel manageable.

Sometimes the answer you are searching for does not come from thinking harder—it comes from stepping away.

A Mood Lift You Can Feel

Sunlight, fresh air and movement all play a role in lifting mood. Even on days when motivation is low, a few minutes outside can create a noticeable shift. It does not have to be dramatic.

Take a short walk or sit in the sun (wearing sunscreen, of course). Watch the kids play. Water the plants. Open a window and let in fresh air.

These small moments add up, supporting emotional well-being in quiet but meaningful ways.

Creation as a Place of Restoration

There is also something deeper happening when we step outside.

Creation has a way of reminding us that we are not in control of everything and that we do not have to be. The rhythm of the

seasons, the steadiness of the sky and the simple beauty of what grows without our effort can gently reorient our hearts.

Stillness is easier to find when we step away from noise. Sometimes the most restorative thing we can do is sit, breathe and remember that we are held within something greater than ourselves.

Simple Ways to Step Outside More Often

You do not need a long hike or a perfect schedule. Start small and stay consistent.

Take a 10-minute walk. Morning, lunch or evening. It all counts.

Bring your routine outside. Coffee, reading and even phone calls can happen in fresh air.

Open your space. Let in sunlight and fresh air whenever you can.

Notice what is around you. Trees, sky, wind, birds—pay attention to what you usually rush past.

Make it a habit. A few minutes daily can have more impact than a long outing once a month.

A Gentle Invitation

You do not have to earn rest. You do not have to wait for the perfect time. *Step outside.*

Let the sun warm your face. Let the air fill your lungs. Let your thoughts slow down just enough to remember that you are more than your schedule.

Because sometimes the reset you are looking for is not found in doing more but in simply stepping into the world God has already made for you. ●

Gut Check

Why Your Digestive Health Matters

When women think about health, digestive health does not always come to mind. It is easy to focus on heart health, sleep or stress while brushing off bloating, constipation or stomach discomfort as “normal.”

But your gut does far more than digest food. It plays a major role in how you feel every day, from your energy level to your immune response to even your mood.

A healthy digestive system helps your body absorb nutrients, eliminate waste and support many of the systems that keep you functioning well. When your gut is out of balance, the effects can show up in surprising ways, including fatigue, brain fog, irritability or skin changes.

More Than Digestion

Your digestive system breaks down food so your body can absorb the nutrients it needs. But the gut also houses trillions of microorganisms that support digestion, help protect against illness and communicate with other systems in the body.

Because of this, digestive health is closely connected to overall well-being. When the gut is functioning well, many other systems work better, too.

The Energy Connection

Your body relies on digestion to absorb vitamins, minerals and other nutrients that fuel daily life. If digestion is sluggish or inflamed, your body may struggle to get what it needs.

That can leave you feeling unusually tired, even when you are eating regularly. Supporting digestive health helps your body make better use of the nourishment you give it.

The Immunity Connection

Much of the body’s immune activity happens in the gut. The digestive tract plays a key role in helping the body recognize what is helpful and what is harmful.

When gut health is supported, the immune system is better equipped to do its job. While no food can prevent illness entirely, daily habits that support digestion can also support your body’s natural defenses.

The Mood Connection

The gut and the brain are closely linked. Many people feel stress or anxiety in their stomach, and ongoing digestive discomfort can also affect mood.

When the digestive system is irritated or out of balance, it can contribute to irritability, fatigue and mental fog. Caring for digestive health can help support emotional well-being as well.

Signs Your Gut May Need Attention

Occasional digestive issues happen to everyone. But frequent symptoms may be worth discussing with your healthcare provider. Common signs include:

- Frequent bloating
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Heartburn or indigestion
- Feeling overly full after eating
- Ongoing fatigue
- Brain fog

Listening to your body is an important part of protecting your health.

Simple Habits That Support Digestive Health

The good news is that many daily habits can help support a healthy digestive system.

Eat more fiber. Fruits, vegetables, beans and whole grains help keep digestion moving and support healthy gut bacteria.

Stay hydrated. Drinking enough water helps the digestive system process food and eliminate waste.

Slow down at meals. Eating too quickly can lead to bloating and discomfort. Chewing thoroughly gives your body time to digest properly.

Manage stress. Stress can disrupt digestion. Quiet prayer, a walk or a few moments of stillness can help calm both body and mind.

Move your body. Regular movement supports healthy digestion and overall well-being.

A Gentle Reminder

Digestive symptoms can be easy to ignore or feel embarrassed about, but they are often the body’s way of asking for attention. Caring for your gut is one more way to care for the body God has given you.

Small choices—eating nourishing foods, drinking water, managing stress and paying attention to how your body feels—can make a meaningful difference over time. ●

DID YOU KNOW?

About **70%** of the body’s immune system is located in the gut.

Source: UCLA Health



ASK AN EXPERT

Gastroenterology

Ariel D Houim, NP

Gerontology Nurse Practitioner, Adult Health Nurse Practitioner
Franciscan Physician Network Gastroenterology Lafayette

1. What exactly does “gut health” mean?

Gut health refers to how well your digestive system functions, including how efficiently you break down food, absorb nutrients and maintain a healthy balance of bacteria in your intestines.

2. How does gut health affect overall well-being?

Your digestive system plays a key role in immunity, energy levels and even mood. An imbalanced gut can contribute to fatigue, inflammation and changes in mental clarity.

3. What are common signs of poor digestive health?

Bloating, gas, constipation, diarrhea, frequent heartburn and abdominal discomfort are all common indicators. Ongoing symptoms should not be ignored and may require evaluation.

4. How can I support my gut health through diet?

Focus on whole foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins. Foods rich in fiber help support digestion, and fermented foods like yogurt can promote beneficial bacteria.

5. Is it normal to feel bloated after meals?

Occasional bloating can happen, especially after large or heavy meals. However, frequent or severe bloating may signal food sensitivities or digestive issues that should be discussed with a physician.

6. How important is hydration for digestion?

Very important. Water helps break down food and move it through the digestive tract. Inadequate hydration can contribute to constipation and sluggish digestion.

7. Can stress really affect my gut?

Yes. The gut and brain are closely connected. Chronic stress can disrupt digestion, leading to symptoms like stomach pain, changes in bowel habits and increased sensitivity.

8. When should I see a specialist for digestive concerns?

You should seek medical care if you experience persistent symptoms, unexplained weight loss, blood in the stool, severe abdominal pain or ongoing changes in bowel habits.

9. Are probiotics necessary for everyone?

Not always. While probiotics can benefit some individuals, especially after illness or antibiotic use, many people can maintain a healthy gut through a balanced diet alone. It's best to consult your physician before starting supplements.

10. What is one daily habit that most improves digestive health?

Consistency. Eating regular, balanced meals, staying hydrated and managing stress all work together to support a healthy digestive system over time.



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CARE FOR YOUR
BODY WITH THE
SAME GRACE GOD
OFFERS YOU.

GLP-1 Medications & *Weight Loss*

A Thoughtful, Faith-Filled
Approach to a Growing Trend

In recent years, medications known as GLP-1s (glucagon-like peptide-1) have become a widely discussed option for weight loss. You may have heard about them in conversation, seen them in headlines or quietly wondered if they might be right for you.

Originally developed to treat diabetes, these medications are now prescribed to support weight loss by helping regulate appetite, slow digestion and stabilize blood sugar levels. For many women, they offer something that feels long overdue: help, especially after years of trying to manage weight through diet and exercise alone.

But like any tool that affects the body, they deserve thoughtful consideration—physically, mentally and spiritually.

Understanding What GLP-1s Do

GLP-1 medications mimic a natural hormone that signals fullness to the brain. This can reduce hunger, lead to smaller portions and support gradual weight loss over time.

For women facing insulin resistance or long-term metabolic challenges, this can be a meaningful shift. The constant mental negotiation around food may quiet. The cycle of restriction and frustration may begin to loosen.

Still, these medications are not a replacement for nourishment, movement, sleep or emotional health. They are meant to support those habits—not replace them. Without those foundations, long-term health remains difficult to sustain.

A Better Question

In a culture that prioritizes quick results, GLP-1 medications can unintentionally reinforce a sense of urgency—the desire to fix something quickly, to finally “get it right.”

But a more grounded question is: “Is this helping me care for my body in a sustainable, honest way?”

That question invites discernment. It shifts the focus from rapid weight loss to long-term well-being. It also makes space to examine motivation—whether the desire for change is driven by comparison and pressure or by a genuine hope for better health, more energy and greater steadiness in daily life.

CONTINUE READING ►►►

The Role of Medical Guidance

GLP-1 medications are not appropriate for everyone. They require oversight from a qualified healthcare provider who understands your full medical history and health goals.

Common side effects include nausea, fatigue and digestive discomfort, particularly in the early stages. There are also practical considerations. These medications can be costly, and in many cases, long-term use is needed to maintain results. Without a clear plan, stopping the medication may lead to weight regain.

This is why honest, ongoing conversations with a trusted provider matter. Good healthcare looks beyond short-term outcomes and considers what is sustainable for the whole person.

Caring for the Whole Person

One of the greatest risks surrounding GLP-1 medications is not the medication itself but the mindset that can develop around it.

If weight loss becomes the only goal, it is easy to neglect the deeper work of building a healthy relationship with food, body image and self-worth. Without that foundation, even meaningful physical changes may not bring the peace many women are seeking.

A holistic approach still matters. The body still needs balanced nourishment—not simply less food but adequate protein, vitamins and consistency. It still needs movement that strengthens and restores. It still needs rest, community and support for emotional health.

And it is still true that your worth has never been tied to your weight.

A Faith-Filled Perspective

From a faith perspective, caring for the body is an act of stewardship, not control.

There is room for medical support when it is used wisely and ethically. Seeking help is not a failure. It can be a responsible, even humble, step toward better health.

At the same time, truth anchors the journey. Your value does not increase as your weight decreases. You are not more loved, more worthy or more whole in a smaller body than you have today.

Health pursued from peace will always look different than health pursued from fear.

Moving Forward With Wisdom

If you are considering a GLP-1 medication, take your time.

Ask questions. Seek guidance. Reflect honestly on your expectations. Consider how this choice fits into your broader approach to caring for your body, mind and spirit.

For some women, these medications may be a helpful part of a larger health journey. For others, they may not be necessary or appropriate.

Either way, the goal remains the same: steady, thoughtful care rooted in truth.

Because true wellness is not found in a prescription alone. It is built in daily choices that support a healthy body, a clear mind and a grounded, faithful heart. ●

5 Questions to Ask Your Doctor About GLP-1 Medications

1. Am I a good candidate for this medication?

Ask how your personal health history, including metabolism, existing conditions and current medications, factors into the decision.

2. What results are realistic for me?

Clear expectations can help prevent discouragement and ground your goals in what is sustainable—not just what is possible.

3. What side effects should I expect, and how can I manage them?

Understanding both short-term and potential long-term effects helps you prepare and respond wisely.

4. How long would I need to take this medication?

Discuss whether this is a short-term support or part of a longer plan, and what happens if you stop.

5. How will this fit into my overall health plan?

A good approach includes nutrition, movement, mental health and ongoing care—not medication alone.



REACH OUT TO A FRANCISCAN PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN TODAY TO TALK ABOUT YOUR OPTIONS.



Ricotta Honey Toast With Fresh Berries

PREP: 5 minutes

TOTAL TIME: 10 minutes

SERVES: 2

Creamy whipped ricotta, fresh berries and a drizzle of honey come together in this simple yet elegant toast that feels like a treat any time of day. Light, flavorful and easy to customize, it's a go-to breakfast that balances nourishment with a touch of sweetness.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup ricotta cheese
- 2 Tb. heavy cream
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 4 slices of your favorite bread
- 1 cup fresh berries (your favorites)
- 2 Tb. honey

DIRECTIONS

- 1 | Toast or grill your slices of bread.
- 2 | In a mixing bowl, combine the ricotta, heavy cream and sugar. Using a hand mixer, beat until the mixture is light and fluffy, about 2 minutes.
- 3 | Place ¼ cup of the mixture on top of the toast. Add desired berries and drizzle with honey.

Learning Self-Compassion

Grace Starts Here

Most women would never speak to a friend the way they speak to themselves. The inner voice can be sharp, quick to correct, quick to replay mistakes and quick to whisper, "You should be doing better than this." And yet, when someone we love is struggling, our instinct is not criticism. It is compassion.

We listen. We reassure. We remind them they are not alone. Somewhere along the way, many of us learned how to extend grace outward but not inward.

The Weight of Our Own Expectations

Women often carry quiet expectations, spoken or unspoken, about who they should be—a better mother, a more patient spouse, more organized, more disciplined, more present, less tired, less reactive or less behind.

When we fall short, even in small ways, the response is rarely gentle. We replay conversations. We dwell on mistakes. We hold ourselves to a standard we would never expect from anyone else. Over time, that pattern becomes familiar. Even normal. But familiar does not mean healthy.

What Self-Compassion Really Means

Self-compassion is not lowering your standards or ignoring growth. It is not making excuses or pretending everything is fine. It is choosing to respond to yourself with honesty and kindness. It sounds like:

- That was hard.
- I am still learning.
- I could have handled that differently but I am not beyond grace.

It is the difference between correction and condemnation. And that difference matters.

The Voice You Live With

You carry your inner voice into everything—your work, your relationships, your parenting and your faith. If that voice is constantly critical, it shapes how you move through the world. It can drain your energy, cloud your confidence and make even small mistakes feel heavy.

But when that voice begins to soften, something shifts. You become more patient, more steady and more able to begin again. Not because life gets easier, but because you are no longer fighting yourself at every step.



Learning to Speak Differently

Changing the way you speak to yourself does not happen overnight. It is a quiet, ongoing practice. It may begin with simply noticing: Would I say this to someone I love? If the answer is no, that is your invitation to pause and reframe. Instead of harsh criticism, try something more grounded:

- I am doing the best I can today.
- This moment does not define me.
- I can try again.

It may feel unfamiliar at first, but unfamiliar does not mean untrue.

Grace Is Not Earned

At the heart of self-compassion is a deeper truth: Grace is not something you earn by getting everything right. It is something God gives freely.

*"Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning."
—Lamentations 3:22–23*

If God's compassion toward you is steady and renewing, then your response to yourself can begin to reflect that same grace—not perfectly, but intentionally.

A Gentler Way Forward

Self-compassion does not remove responsibility. It does not replace growth. It simply creates space for growth to happen without shame as the driving force. You can acknowledge where you want to grow while still recognizing your worth. You can take ownership without tearing yourself down. You can begin again—again and again—without believing you have failed beyond repair.

A Quiet Practice

This may not be something others see. It happens in small moments:

- When you choose not to replay a mistake for the tenth time
- When you speak kindly to yourself after a hard day
- When you remember that you are still in process

It is quiet, but it is powerful. You were never meant to live under constant self-criticism. The same grace you offer to others is not something you have to withhold from yourself. So the next time your inner voice turns harsh, pause, take a breath and respond the way grace would.

Because learning self-compassion is about learning to see yourself the way you have been seen all along—with patience, with mercy and with love. ●

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