

KNOW YOUR HEALTH PRO

Susan Clark, nurse practitioner

By George White
For FLORIDA TODAY

It's a long way to the hometown of nurse practitioner Susan Clark of Advanced Pain and Neuromuscular Consultants of Brevard.

"My mom is German and my dad is American, but he was over there 32 years. I was 17 when we moved here and speak fluent German," she said.

Clark's family had a condo in Brevard County and, when her father retired, they moved here.

Clark talked about her career and how patients can use alternatives to narcotics for back pain.



SUSAN CLARK, 48, NURSE PRACTITIONER

Hometown: Karlsruhe, Germany
City of residence: Cocoa Beach
Education: Bachelor's degree in nursing from University of Central Florida, master's of business administration from Florida Tech, master's of science, nurse practitioner from University of South Florida in Tampa
Contact: Advanced Pain and Neuromuscular Consultants of Brevard, 307 E. New Haven Ave., Melbourne; 8075 Spyglass Hill Road, Viera, 321-729-8223.

QUESTION: What does pain management involve?

ANSWER: It's diagnosing, ordering MRIs and other diagnostics to diagnose the pain, either cervical, thoracic or lumbar. Here we do all pain, not just the spinal. I also get people into physical therapy, adjust their medications and order non-narcotic medications. A lot of what we do is teach people how to take care of themselves.

Q: What has been the biggest innovation in your field during your career?

A: There's disc replacement and also now there are spinal chord stimulators that have improved greatly over the past few years.

Q: Are most of your patients compliant?

A: I would say 95 percent are compliant. The ones that aren't compliant are usually the ones who don't feel that their pain is controlled and don't want to try to do other things for themselves to improve. Exercising is a huge part of it to prevent further damage and to improve.

Q: Have you ever considered becoming a doctor?

A: No. I find that as a nurse practitioner, we have the luxury of spending more time with the patients and bridging that gap.

Q: Is it frustrating to know that someone is in pain, but you can't find physical evidence?

A: Everybody's perception of pain is different. There are people who have multiple disc herniations in their back and have hardly any pain, then you see somebody with one small disc bulge in terrible pain.

Q: What preventive actions do you advise your patients to do to

avoid bad problems?

A: Always bend at the knees and keep your core muscles strong. When you carry any object, keep it close to your body and don't twist while you're doing it. As far as the neck, try to avoid anything where you're looking up a lot.

Q: What about the impact of long-term computer use?

A: We're seeing a lot of people who are having neck pain because of the computer and they're not in an ergonomic chair.

Q: Does getting older necessarily mean that you will stoop over?

A: You can do something to prevent it: nutrition, calcium and vitamin D. It is inevitable that the older we get, the more the spine breaks down. The main thing is to watch your weight, stay healthy and to not smoke.



Grab-and-go breakfast can be good for you, too

By Susie Bond
For FLORIDA TODAY

As a parent, getting students prepared for the day means more than ensuring homework is in the backpack. It also means making sure they've had a healthy breakfast.

Studies show eating a proper breakfast can improve cognitive performance, put students in a better mood, help improve glucose regulation, and jump starts the metabolism. In addition, research shows that breakfast-eaters typically weigh less and maintain healthier weights.

It's no surprise that skipping breakfast causes us to overeat

at lunchtime and consume a greater amount of calories throughout the day. Skipping breakfast also causes dramatic drops and spikes in blood glucose levels, which is hard on the pancreas and liver.

Fortunately, offering a quick but healthy breakfast to your child doesn't need to be time-consuming. All a healthy breakfast needs to have is something from each of these three nutrient groups: protein (nuts, dairy, eggs); carbohydrates (whole grain cereals, breads, oatmeal); and produce (fruits and vegetables).

Breakfast sets the stage for the day, so make it nutritious. Peanut butter packs plenty of protein and can be a topper for bread or a dip for fruit. GANNETT

Incorporating these nutrient groups into your breakfast can be done in a variety of ways so you don't get bored eating the same old cereal every morning. Here are some easy-to-prepare, quick ideas:

- » Peanut or almond butter: Spread on whole-wheat bread, English muffins or bagels; or as a dip for apples and bananas
- » Cottage cheese or Greek-style yogurt: Top with fruit, nuts, and/or granola
- » Simple bowl of oatmeal and/or a scrambled egg
- » Cheese, fruit, and nuts
- » Whole-wheat waffle, a dollop of yogurt, handful of blueberries and a drizzle of honey

The possibilities are endless. With a little planning, you'll see that giving your student a jump-start for the day isn't hard to make a part of that jam-packed morning routine.

Susie Bond is a registered/licensed dietitian and nutritionist with Health First's Pro-Health & Fitness Centers.

COOL STUFF

Northern Lights yoga mats

Just in time for the holiday season comes the perfect gift for the yoga enthusiast on your list. Northern Lights yoga mats are available in Passion (red), Sunset (orange), Sky (blue), Energy (purple) and Wilderness (green). The mats are 72 inches long, 24 inches wide and 5 millimeters thick. They are made from biodegradable material and are free from latex, phthalates and silicon. The mats have a four-and-a-half-star rating on Amazon.com's feedback. Available at auroraeyoga.com or amazon.com for \$44.95.

—Chuck McClung



Running hands under water isn't enough to kill germs. GETTY IMAGES

Ward off sickness by washing your hands



CONNIE BOBIK
NURSES KNOW

With the holidays come stress, crowds of people shopping in stores, holiday parties, hugging and handshaking — all of which lowers our resistance and makes us susceptible to viruses and bacteria. Remember this — your hands are a magnet for germs.

Think about everything you touched today and how many people may have touched those same items — from money to your smartphone. Millions of germs live on

our hands. So, how can you protect yourself?

Wash your hands. That's one of the most effective means to avoid getting sick or spreading germs, but are we doing it right?

Do we wash them before we eat? After using the bathroom?

We may not take the time to wash our hands effectively. A quick pass of hands under running water will not work. You need running water, soap and friction. That means rubbing your hands together and scrubbing the palms and backs of the hands and between the fingers for at least 15 to 20 seconds. Hands also should be rinsed well.

The use of a 60 percent alcohol-based hand sanitizer may be used in a pinch. Don't overuse — alcohol may dry the skin causing tiny cracks, which provides an easy entry for germs.

Bobik is chairwoman of the Department of Nursing at Brevard Community College.

STUDY BREAK

'Hard Hats' have high rates of injury

NewsDay

Construction workers in the United States have a high risk of work-related

injuries and an increased risk of work-related illness and death, a new study shows.

Researchers analyzed

data from several national sources and found that a construction worker has a 75 percent chance of suffering a disabling injury over a 45-year career, and a 1-in-200 risk of being fatally injured on the job.

Hispanic construction workers have a 20 percent higher risk of dying from a work-related injury than whites, according to the study authors from the Center for Construction

Research and Training.

They also found that people who start construction work at age 20 have a 15 percent chance of developing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease over their lifetime and an 11 percent chance of developing dust-related changes to the lung tissue.

The study was scheduled for release at the annual meeting of the American Public Health Association, held in Washington, D.C.

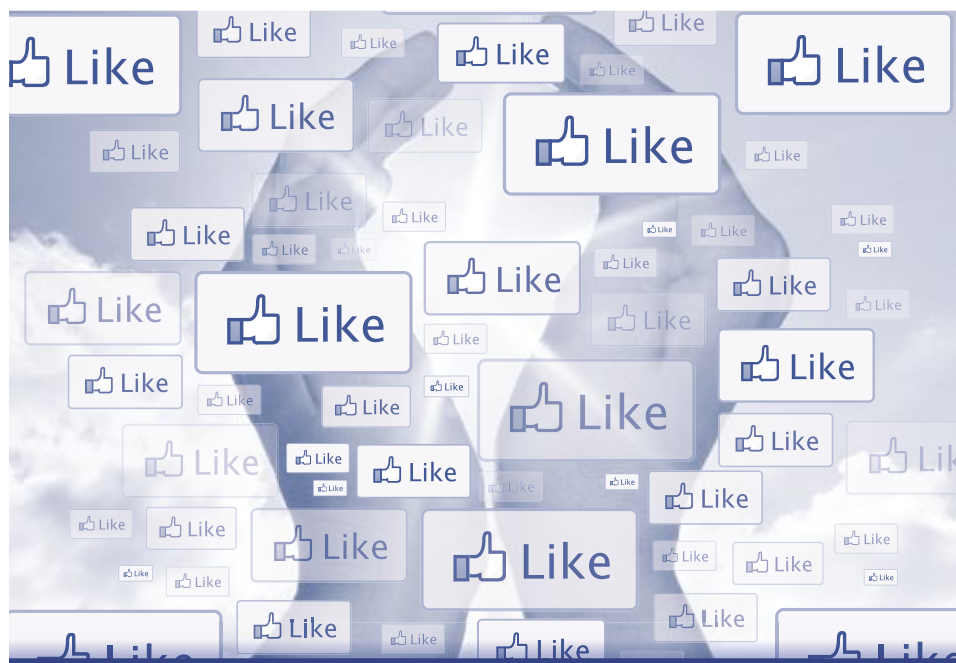
While great strides have been made in reducing construction injuries and illnesses, the numbers are still stubbornly high," Pete Stafford, executive director of CPWR, said.

"Workers and their families suffer the consequences of disabling injuries, and this research shows it's far too common. So we must continue to

raise awareness of the problems and hope to see our research findings put to use to reduce construction fatalities, injuries and illnesses," Stafford said.

Research presented at the medical meetings is considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed medical journal.

A new study also found that past trauma may contribute to bowel disorder.



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