



Inside

- 1 Welcome Back! Celebrating Sheli's Return
- 2 A Parent's Guide to Managing Teen Mood Swings
Estate Planning: Your Path to a Secure Future
- 3 Van Dyck Law Dementia Center Opens
One-Pot Chicken Noodle Soup
Take a Break
- 4 Simple Lifestyle Tweaks to Keep Your Blood Sugar in Check

People tend to pay more attention to their overall health and fitness as they age. If you ignore your aches, pains, and injuries, they're more likely to worsen, which is why so many of us go out of our way to track specific health measurements. One measurement you should track, especially if you're showing symptoms of prediabetes, is your blood sugar.

Maintaining low blood sugar helps prevent cognitive decline, kidney disease, nerve damage, and more. However, many don't know how to lower their blood sugar if it's starting to reach dangerous levels. Here are two lifestyle changes that can help keep blood sugar low while improving other aspects of your health.

EXERCISE REGULARLY.

Exercise becomes increasingly important as we age, but this doesn't mean you have to go all out every time you strap on your running shoes or go to the gym. Experts recommend that you get around 150 minutes of exercise every week, and it doesn't have to be any more strenuous than a brisk walk. You'll see much better results if you pick a routine that's easy to maintain and follow.

CUT BACK ON ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS.

When people try to keep their blood sugar balanced, they usually make an added effort to reduce their intake of sweets. However, nearly all processed carbs pose a risk. Even eating things like bread, pasta, noodles, and white rice can raise sugar levels. Pay attention to what you eat, and your body will thank you.

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NEW YEAR, NEW HORIZONS

NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO LEAD A MAJOR EXPANSION OF DEMENTIA CARE SERVICES

Sheli Monacchio was 14 years old when she became the primary caregiver for a family member with dementia. She and her brother, 11, cared for their grandmother, who was suffering from Alzheimer's disease, and also for their mentally ill mother. "It was very stressful," Sheli says.

At that time in the 1980s, people had no idea what Alzheimer's disease was. They just labeled her grandmother as senile or "needing the loony bin," as one doctor told Sheli's grandfather. Not until Ronald Reagan was diagnosed with dementia did family members realize, "Oh, that's what Nanny had," and that Nanny wasn't crazy after all, Sheli says.

Determined to give people with dementia a quality of life that her grandmother did not enjoy, Sheli has since built a 26-year career in senior care. She is certified as an Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Care Trainer and a support group facilitator.

And now, we are thrilled to welcome Sheli as our new executive director! She is a dedicated and highly trained teacher, advisor, and coach to professionals and family caregivers alike. Drawing upon her strong relationships with health care professionals throughout our six-county region, Sheli will be leading a major expansion of our caregiver support, dementia care education, and referral capabilities.

Some of you already know Sheli; she has been involved with our firm since 2018, but only on a part-time basis since the end of 2020. Now that she is back full time, our clients, friends, and neighbors in the community will have fuller access to her skills in caregiver support and training, care referrals, educational programming, and community events.

Sheli and Regina Taylor, our director of life care planning, will provide a kind of "dementia concierge" service for families and professionals in need of resources, support, or assistance with

placement of a loved one. Our standard for providing referrals is to recommend only services of such high quality that we would choose them for our own family members.

We are thrilled that Sheli has returned to play a leading role in building our firm into a community education center for families, caregivers, and professional service providers. For an early glimpse at the programs we are planning, look inside this newsletter.

In all of these initiatives, we are getting back to our roots. Our mission is to lead with kindness in dementia care, providing not only excellent legal services for estate planning and elder law, but caregiver support and community education as well. Knowledge is power, and we want to empower our clients and other families in the community. We want to be one place where families know they can come to get all the information, referrals, and support they need. If you have questions, concerns, or a need for referrals or information for dementia or senior care, do not hesitate to reach out to us today!

We have always celebrated the new year as a fresh start, but this year, we are especially excited. Welcome back, Sheli! We could not be more enthusiastic about what the future holds!

-Fiona Van Dyck





Decode Teen Mood Swings

Help Your Teen Through Their Emotional Ups and Downs

Being a teenager comes with a roller coaster of emotions. While mood swings are generally a normal part of growing up, they can be a red flag for more serious issues. The usual causes of teen mood swings are hormonal changes, stress, and the search for self-identity. Still, it's just as vital to recognize when these fluctuations are atypical or indicate something more in order to help you support your teen safely.

SUPPORT YOUR TEEN THROUGH HIGHS AND LOWS

Staying connected with your teen is essential to understanding their mindset. Always try to engage in open conversations that allow them to express their feelings and thoughts without fear of judgment. This connection can provide a stable foundation of trust, but these three strategies can help manage those tricky emotional waters:

- Remain Calm:* You must stay composed even when your teen's emotions are high. Your calmness can create a more soothing environment for them.
- Encourage Self-Expression:* Inspire your teen to explore their feelings through creative outlets such as music, art, or writing. This expression can provide a healthy channel for their emotions.
- Promote Healthy Habits:* Regular physical activity and proper sleep can significantly improve mood and overall well-being.

WHEN IT'S MORE THAN JUST MOOD SWINGS

It's essential to be vigilant about signs indicating a deeper issue than typical adolescent moodiness. Some red flags are persistent sadness, withdrawal from social activities, or changes in behavior like an increase or decrease in eating or sleeping. These symptoms could suggest underlying mental health conditions such as depression or anxiety.

WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

If you observe persistent signs of distress or disruptive mood swings that interfere with your teen's daily functioning, it might be time to seek professional help. Mental health issues are absolutely treatable, and early intervention can make a significant difference. Share your concerns with your child's pediatrician, or consider working with a mental health professional. Counseling and therapy can provide a safe space for your teen to process their emotions and develop effective coping strategies.

When you understand the complexities of your teen's emotions and know when to act, you can help guide them through the tumultuous years of adolescence with empathy and support.

You Don't Want to Miss These Events!

The Dementia Center at Van Dyck Law — Q1 Offerings

We are excited to open the Dementia Center at Van Dyck Law as a place where community members can meet and receive materials and information about dementia, estate planning, and healthy aging. We have some exciting events planned for the first quarter of 2025, and we invite you to check them out!

These events are open to all community members, clients, and professionals unless otherwise noted.

FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

When: Jan. 15, Feb. 19, and March 19 (the third Wednesday of each month), at 2 p.m.

Where: The Dementia Center at Van Dyck Law, 707 State Road, Suite 102, Princeton

For registration or more information, please call **609-580-1044**.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND DEMENTIA CARE SEMINAR

For Social Workers, CALA, LNHA, and Nurses seeking to obtain the Certified Dementia Practitioner Designation (8 CE's)

When & Where:


- Jan. 24: The Delaney of Bridgewater, 901 Frontier Road, Bridgewater
- March 12: The Dementia Center at Van Dyck Law, 707 State Road, Suite 102, Princeton

Registration begins at 8:30 a.m.
Classes from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Cost: \$175

Breakfast and lunch will be provided.

Register by emailing the Dementia Center at **DementiaCenter@vandyckfirm.com**.



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN DEMENTIA: WHAT EVERY FAMILY NEEDS TO KNOW

When: Feb. 27, 1-3 p.m.

Where: The Dementia Center at Van Dyck Law, 707 State Road, Suite 102, Princeton

For registration or more information, please call **609-580-1044**.

Plan Today, Protect Tomorrow

Have You Updated Your Estate Plan Lately?

As the famed investor Warren Buffett once said, "Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago." That insight from one of the nation's most forward-thinking investors is well-suited to planning for future long-term care and end-of-life needs.

Have you planted a tree to protect yourself and your loved ones in the future?

Among the questions to consider: Have you prepared, at a minimum, a durable power of attorney, a medical power of attorney, and a last will and testament? These documents not only ensure your wishes will be carried out, but they also spare your loved ones from having to make difficult choices for you if you are incapacitated.

Is there a family member who may need special support after your death? (If that dependent is a teen with special needs who is nearing the age of 18, planning for their needs before they reach legal independence is urgent!) In addition, might a loved one need to move into an assisted living community or skilled nursing home in the future? If so, laying the

financial groundwork through long-term care insurance or planning for Medicaid eligibility is essential.

Your plans must also keep pace with life changes. If you have moved, married, or had children since your last estate plan update, or if you have gotten divorced, had a death in the family, or simply experienced a change of heart, all of these transitions should be reflected in an updated long-term care and estate plan.

If you don't define your intentions, the state of New Jersey will do it for you! Call us today to arrange an estate-plan review and consultation. We will help ensure a secure future for you and your family!



One-Pot Chicken Noodle Soup

Inspired by AllRecipes.com

INGREDIENTS

- 2 1/2 lbs skinless, bone-in chicken thighs
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tsp pepper
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 10 cups chicken broth
- 4 celery ribs, chopped
- 4 medium carrots, chopped
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 3 cups uncooked egg noodles (about 8 oz)
- 1 tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tbsp lemon juice

DIRECTIONS

- Season chicken with salt and pepper. In an 8-quart stockpot over medium-high heat, add oil and chicken and cook until golden brown, 3-4 minutes. Remove chicken and set aside.
- Add onion to drippings; cook over medium-high heat for 4-5 minutes. Add garlic and cook for 1 minute. Add broth and bring to a boil. Return chicken to pot. Add celery, carrots, bay leaves, and thyme. Reduce heat and cover; simmer until chicken is tender, 25-30 minutes.
- Turn off heat. Remove chicken to a plate. Add noodles and let stand, covered, until noodles are tender, 20-22 minutes.
- Shred chicken meat into bite-size pieces, and return to pot. Stir in parsley and lemon juice, and discard bay leaves.

TAKE A BREAK

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BEGINNINGS

BLANKETS

CARNATION

CAPRICORN

GARNET

HEALTHY

ICICLE

PENGUIN

PLANNING

RESOLUTION

SNOWBOARD

SOUPLY