

Second Opinion

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HELLO

Spring

SECONDOPINIONMAGAZINE.COM

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Importance of Grooming Your Dog

By Ruff Life Pet Hotel



All dogs need some grooming TLC from time to time. Below is a list of reasons you should have your fur baby groomed, whether you do it at home or bring your dog to a professional groomer.

1. Nails:

Nails left untrimmed can grow into the paw pads and cause pain when the dog walks. If their nails do get to that point, the vet will have to cut the nail and surgically remove the part of the nail that is embedded in the paw pad. In severe cases, the dog may need to be sedated for the nail removal in the pad.

2. Ears:

Long-coated breeds (non-shedding) need to have the hair plucked from their ears. Too much hair in the ear canal can cause an infection, resulting in hearing loss and other issues that would require a visit to the vet. Dogs that shed also need to have their ears cleaned to remove any buildup of wax or dirt. Signs that your dog may have an ear infection include: pawing at an ear frequently, rubbing the ear on the floor, the ear is warm to the touch, or it has a smelly discharge.

3. Anal Glands:

Have you ever witnessed a dog scoot its butt across the floor? Well, he or she is trying to express its anal glands to release the buildup of secretions that are in the glands by its bottom. If these glands are not expressed periodically, it can become impacted and cause an infection. Lots of larger dogs are able to take care of this by themselves, but little dogs need help to get it all out.

4. Eyes:

For breeds that do not shed, the hair around the eyes needs to be trimmed. Not only can they not see, but the oils from the hair can cause an infection.

5. Sanitary Area:

Your dog's sanitary area needs to be trimmed to prevent a yeast infection, which can be caused by urine on the same spot of skin for a prolonged period of time. Also if the bottom is not trimmed, some of their "#2" can get caught in the hair.

6. Skin & Hair:

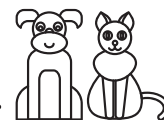
Just like people, dogs can get mats in their hair. A tight mat will pull on the dog's skin and can cause lesions. When a mat gets wet, it actually becomes tighter, pulling the skin even more.

Also, if your dog has flaky skin or has been itching and scratching, they can create a skin irritation that may require special medicated shampoo and more frequent baths to help the skin get back to normal. Dogs that are non-shedding and have an excessive amount of hair can get overheated, causing heat stroke, especially in the warmer summer months.

Groomers can find lumps, bumps, and even teeth issues that you may not notice. Since groomers do not see your dog on a daily basis, they are more likely to notice any unusual things on your dog and may suggest a visit to the vet. For dogs that may have some anxiety, using the same groomer can help the dog form a bond with them, which can help reduce the nervousness they may feel.

Ruff Life Pet Hotel has 3 full-time groomers to choose from for all your dog grooming needs!

Canis Major Nail Services By Becky Streever



Trimming your dog's toenails can be one of the least exciting things about being a dog owner. Luckily for you, Jessie Nelson with Canis Major Nail Services runs a mobile nail trimming service and is here to help.

"Getting your dog's nails trimmed is essential for their health," says Nelson, owner and groomer for Canis Major Nail Services. Long nails can break or get caught on things. "Nails that are too long can also change the structure of your dog's foot," Nelson adds. "That goes all the way to their spine and affects the way that they move. This can cause issues not only with the feet, but can also increase the risk of arthritis, hip and knee problems, and the risk of slipping."

With Canis Major Nail Services, the dog gets to stay in his or her familiar surroundings, where

they are the most comfortable. Nelson brings a portable table to help keep the dog secure, but she will have the dog lie on the floor if that is the safer option. The whole process usually takes 15 minutes or less, and involves plenty of treats and positive reinforcement. Nelson says it's important to get nail trims on a schedule to keep nail length as well as positive behavior and comfortability consistent. "Not all dogs go from severe nail trimming anxiety to liking it, but they learn to trust the process and it gets easier. It's really exciting for both me and the owners to see the changes in the dog's behavior over time."

Nelson recommends scheduling appointments 4-8 weeks apart, depending on the dog's needs. Canis Major Nail Service operates within normal business hours most weekdays, and Nelson usually offers one evening per month. Nelson is able to travel within 25 minutes of her home in Eau Claire.

To schedule an appointment, call or text Jessie Nelson at 715-450-3120, visit Canis Major Nail Service's Facebook page, or send an email to canismajorgrooming@gmail.com.

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01 | YAYA ORGANICS - DOG WHISPERER® HEALTHY + ECO-FRIENDLY SHAMPOOS

Clean, eco-friendly dog shampoos with SLS-free, coconut-based formulas that are packed to the brim with nourishing botanicals and soothing extracts like organic aloe, neem, Vitamin Pro-V B5 and more. yayaorganics.com

04 | SMACK - RAW DEHYDRATED SUPERFOOD FOR DOGS

Their advanced, low-temperature dehydration method preserves the nutrients in their food through minimal processing which aids digestion. In terms of superfood ingredients they select organic, non-GMO superfoods like wild caught salmon, pumpkin, pineapple, spinach, turmeric, strawberries, blueberries, kale & cranberries. smackpetfood.com

02 | POOP 'N TIE - WASTE BAG DISPENSER & ROLLS

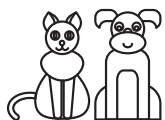
Created with PURPOSE! Simple pickup: easy to close, easy to carry. Extra thick: leak-proof & biodegradable. LED flashlight: easily find poop at night. Carry clip: hands-free walk to the trashcan. pntpets.com

03 | WILD ONE - TOY KIT

Their bestselling Triangle Tug, Twist Toss, and Bolt Bite. Each toy is made of natural, pet-safe rubber and features a reinforced core for added strength. Thoughtfully designed to heighten engagement and to look good in your home. wildone.com

05 | ETHIQUE - DOG SHAMPOO BARS

Is there anything better than a freshly washed, floofy pooch (or other furry friends)? Their range of delicious-smelling dog soap bars are specially formulated with plant-based ingredients, to make fur soft and silky while being super gentle on the skin. ethique.com



Choosing the Best Food for Your Dog By Becky Streeter

Dogs will eat almost anything. Because of this, they completely rely on you to make right the decisions for them, but with all the current fads and multitudes of brands out there, it can get confusing fast. Below are the major diet plans, with pros and cons, to help you make the best choice for your furry friend.

Kibble

Every brand has a slightly different recipe for dry food, but each is required by the USDA to be "safe to eat, produced under sanitary conditions, contain no harmful substances, and be truthfully labeled." Required ingredients include proteins, grains, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. The ingredients are processed together and cooked, then a preservative is added to prevent the fat from becoming rancid.

Potential benefits include healthier gums and reduced dental plaque, reduced risk of bacteria, ease of storage and preparation (bag to bowl!), and less risk of spoilage. This is also generally the least expensive diet for your pup. Not all brands are created equally, however, so be wary of ones with a high carbohydrate count, added sugar, or low-quality ingredients.

Fresh

This diet is made up of natural ingredients such as cooked proteins and fresh or cooked fruits and vegetables. Benefits include a shiny coat, fresher breath, increased energy, good for heart health, and improved eyesight and stool. However, planning for this diet takes time, and it can get expensive. It can also be tricky to gauge the proper amounts you should feed your dog to make sure they get enough of the right things, and not too much of others. If you are interested in exclusively this diet for your pet, contact a

nutritionist certified by the American College of Veterinary Nutrition for ideas to create a cooked homemade diet appropriate for your pet.

Raw

Australian veterinarian Ian Billinghurst first suggested the idea of Biologically Appropriate Raw Food (BARF) in 1993, based on that of canines before they became domesticated: 70% muscle meat, 10% raw edible bone, 7% vegetables, 5% liver, 5% other secreting organs, 2% seeds or nuts, and 1% fruit.

You can purchase prepackaged items from the store or online, or create a meal plan yourself. The problem is that wolves used to eat the entire animal—muscle, organs, tendons, skin, bones and fur—to create a completely nourishing meal. This can be hard to replicate for your domesticated dog if you meal plan yourself. Although it can be expensive, if you choose this diet, it might be best to purchase prepackaged items.

No peer-reviews have been published for potential benefits of the raw foods diet, however testimonials say they have noticed shinier coats, healthier skin, higher energy levels, cleaner teeth, ease of digestion, and smaller stools. Documented risks of this diet include an unbalanced diet if not administered in the proper ratio, potential choking hazards or puncture wounds from unchewed bones, bacterial contamination from *Listeria* and *Salmonella*, and bacterial contamination to humans from handling or not properly sanitizing after handling.

Ultimately, before making any drastic changes to your pet's diet, consult your veterinarian. They are very educated and truly have your dog's best interests in mind. Once you have your veterinarian's input, and compiled your own research, it is really up to you how to best manage your dog's health.

Sources:

- <https://www.webmd.com/pets/dogs/features/raw-dog-food-dietary-concerns-benefits-and-risks>
- <https://www.petmd.com/dog/nutrition/5-mistakes-people-make-when-feeding-pets-raw-food-diet>
- <https://www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/animal-health-literacy/get-facts-raw-pet-food-diets-can-be-dangerous-you-and-your-pet>
- <https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/nutrition/feed-my-dog-fresh-raw-food-or-dog-kibble>



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Dog nail care that comes to you!

Is This OK For My Dog to Eat?

OK

- Fruits and Veggies: Apples, carrots, coconut, corn, blueberries, bananas, cucumbers, green beans, watermelon, pumpkin
- Grains: Bread, white rice, quinoa
- Dairy: Milk, cheese, plain yogurt
- Nuts: Cashews, peanuts and peanut butter
- Meat/Poultry (all fully cooked): Chicken, eggs, ham, pork, turkey
- Fish (all fully cooked): Salmon, shrimp, tuna
- Other: Honey, popcorn

NO WAY

- Alcohol
- Avocados
- Bread dough
- Grapes and raisins
- Macadamia nuts
- Citrus fruits
- Ice cream
- Cherries
- Almonds
- Chocolate
- Cinnamon
- Coffee
- Garlic
- Chives
- Leeks
- Onions



<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/nutrition/human-foods-dogs-can-and-cant-eat/>
<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/324453#which-human-foods-can-dogs-eat>



Cats, Coffee, and Comfort Come to Our Community!

Nestled in the heart of downtown Eau Claire, Mr. Kitty's Cat Cafe offers a unique experience for both coffee lovers and feline enthusiasts.



Mr. Kitty's
Cat Cafe & Boutique

Upon entering, patrons are enveloped in a cozy atmosphere, with the scent of freshly brewed coffee and baked goods in the front room. Big windows divide the spaces between good eats and the cats but rest assured you can take your coffee or baked good into the kitty area and play. Cat visits in the lounge will be \$15 for an hour, which will include a beverage of your choice.

The cafe boasts a charming interior adorned with cat-themed decor, creating an inviting space where visitors can unwind and enjoy the company of furry friends. Soft, ambient lighting and comfortable seating contribute to the cafe's relaxed ambiance, providing the perfect backdrop for a leisurely visit or a quick coffee break.

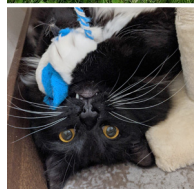
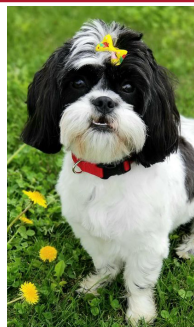
At Mr. Kitty's, the focus isn't just on serving great coffee says owner Shelli Schuppel, it also is providing a home-like environment for the adoptable cats in partnership with the Eau Claire County Humane Association (ECCHA). Through these efforts, Mr. Kitty's not only provides a safe and loving environment for its resident cats but also plays a vital role in addressing the issue of pet homelessness in the Eau Claire area.

Overall, Mr. Kitty's Cat Cafe is more than just a coffee shop—it's a haven for cat lovers, a welcoming space for coffee connoisseurs, and a burgeoning pillar of the Eau Claire community. Whether you're stopping in for a caffeine fix or simply seeking some feline companionship, this charming cafe offers a purr-fect escape from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

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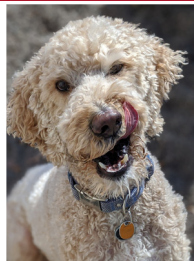
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Tours always welcome!





Why CSA's Are So Great By Becky Streever

Community-Supported Agriculture, CSA for short, is a crop-sharing system that directly connects farms to customers' tables. Customers purchase a share of the business prior to the season beginning. As the season progresses, boxes of incredibly fresh produce or other goods can be picked up at a specified location on a regularly scheduled day and time.

When you purchase a share from a farm, you are sharing in that farm's yields for the season. Participating farms have a limited number of shares available, and they depend on pre-season purchases to help cover the cost of seeds, fertilizer, equipment maintenance, and labor. Share prices and packages vary by farm. Common CSA's include fruits and vegetables, meat, eggs, flowers or soap. On a week-to-week basis, your share might look differently depending on what is available and what is in season at the time. Fruit and vegetable shares might only start with some herbs and lettuce, but will likely be more colorful and bountiful as the season progresses.

Weather and the ever-changing climate each play a role in farming, and can affect a CSA share. When you purchase a share, you are agreeing to support the farmer no matter what happens because you believe in their practices and goods. That means if there are extreme temperatures and a severe lack of rain that destroy a strawberry crop, you do not get monetarily reimbursed. Rachel Keniston, a farmer at Solheim Market Wisconsin Garden, says they vigilantly watch the weather and make use of their resources accordingly.

Keniston says,
"We have water available but we use it carefully.
Drought did not keep us from having beautiful produce last summer."

Additionally, if crops do perform poorly due to uncontrollable circumstances, farmers often provide a substitute item.

One of the great benefits of a CSA is you really get to know your farmer and their growing practices. For example, at Solheim, which means 'Sun Home' in Norwegian, they focus on the importance of growing responsibly and in sustainable ways. "Our primary goal at Solheim is rebuilding a healthy and diverse ecological landscape to produce an abundant variety of nourishing food," says Keniston. "Our growing beds are worked with hand tools such as broad forks, and we don't use herbicides or pesticides, so our crops are as safe and clean as possible. The soil is healthy and holds moisture well." In fact, Solheim even uses the Vegvisir as their logo. Keniston says, "In Northern tradition, the Vegvisir is a magical symbol of navigation often called the 'Viking Compass.' It represents a guidepost used to protect its users from becoming lost, or helping them find their way in bad weather, be it literal or figurative."

Signing up for a CSA has many other benefits including:

- Incredibly fresh goods—most produce is picked within 24 hours of pickup
- 100% of your money goes directly to the farmer and there is no need for packaging, transportation, or middlemen—simultaneously decreasing the carbon footprint
- Farmers know that what they plant will be used, instead of hoping it will be purchased

As an example of a CSA package, Solheim's weekly share includes whichever fruits, vegetables or herbs are at their peak, packaged in a biodegradable bag that can either be returned and reused or composted. You will also receive a weekly e-newsletter about the items in the package, an update about the farm, and some recipes for preparation. Shares are \$500 for the season (usually June through October) and can be paid in lump sum or by installment. Each weekly package is enough to feed two to three people. To learn more or sign up for a share, visit www.solheimwi.com.

To learn more about other CSA:

- Strike up a conversation with a vendor you like at your local farmers market and see what they have to offer
- Volume One has a list of local CSA's on their website: volumeone.org/sites/summer/listings/categories/200140-community-supported-agriculture.
- Menomonie Market Food Co-Op has locations in both Menomonie and Eau Claire. They are a crop-sharing store, and they also have a wealth of information on local CSA's. You can pop in there for a brochure to research on your own time, or visit their website: www.mmfc.coop/csa.

Source: Menomonie Market Food Co-Op.
www.mmfc.coop/csa.



Kaiserson Bee Co. and Community-Supported Apiculture

By Drew Kaiser



Keeping bees is no easy task. Once you get past the expense, the stings, the learning curve, and the variability of each season, it's more than enough to drive most people away from the activity. On top of that, add the ever-increasing number of maladies conspiring against bees, and you're talking about a task that requires a community effort. From planting a garden to avoiding pesticide use to supporting local beekeepers, it all plays a part in sustaining pollinators and their human counterparts. Kaiserson Bee Co. has taken the concept of CSA and applied its own twist: Community-Supported Apiculture. Their CSA seeks to disperse the burden and reward supporters with sweet, sweet nectars at the end of the season.



Kaiserson started at UWEC in 2010 as a geography research project by Ellen Sorenson, investigating how land use played a significant part in the ever-increasing mortality of honeybees. From there, advocacy and education have been core concepts infused into the work of Sorenson and her husband, Drew Kaiser, who now does most of Kaiserson's work. They've twice been featured on PBS's *Around the Farm Table*. They teach all levels of learners the basics of bees and ways the average person can help our pollinating friends survive and thrive.

As for their bees, they've approached their practice much like that initial research: to seek out land use that best accounts for their bees'

needs. Rather than focus all their workers in a small area, Kaiserson spreads their apiaries across the Chippewa Valley in small clusters. Many locations are coupled with farmers to boost production, but a significant portion of their bee yards are in residential settings. Their locations span Chippewa, Eau Claire, and Trempealeau Counties. They harvest small, sustainable quantities of honey from June to September and bottle them by location and date. This uniquely expresses the varied flavors and experiences one can have with honey. To taste their harvests side by side can be enlightening. Much ado is made of terroir when it comes to things like wine, but the forage circumference of honey bees offers a great variety and significance to the hyper-local effects of place.

Kaiserson's CSA members commit to the future harvest of honey with the promise that they get access to batches that may never make it to public market. Depending on your household's consumption, they offer several levels, from 2 to 20 pounds. As a Kaiserson member, you're invited to a harvest celebration to taste and select your favorites. Some of their levels even include maple syrup or waxen goods like candles. They're also likely to include special gifts like apparel or R&D products. But beyond all the physical rewards, Kaiserson CSA members ensure this pursuit continues to expand. Who knew doing good could taste so good?



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Farm Fresh Meat

By Becky Streeeter

You might have never thought about it before, but that hamburger or steak you hold in your hands ready to be purchased and cooked has been on a long journey. Depending on where you got it from, it could be a good story or a bad story, maybe even a horror story. If you buy your meat from the grocery store, you will likely never find out. But if you buy your meat straight from the farm, you know where it's been from start to finish.

Purchasing meat directly from the farm helps you become invested in what ultimately ends up on your plate. You get to meet the farmer, who is usually more than happy to answer any questions you have about their animals, practices and products. You get to see how the animals are raised, and make sure it's up to your standards. Middlemen are cut from the equation, ensuring your money goes directly to the farmer, and you often get a higher quality beef for a lower price than you would at the grocery store, all while lowering the miles the product travels. Additionally, the health benefits of consuming grass-fed beef include lower fat content and richer in many essential vitamins.

Below are two great, local farms that have a passion for what they do and take pride in their farming practices:



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Bloomer, Wisconsin
seibelsorganic.com

Seibel Organic Meats Bloomer, Wi

This 100+ year old family farm raises certified organic steers. They are free-range and 100% grass-fed with clean grass—no herbicides, pesticides or synthetic fertilizers. They are also never fed any antibiotics or hormones. When the steers are ready, the Seibel's search out area processors to cut the meat and return it to them to be sold. Adam Seibel, one of the farmers and owners, says, "We feel our customers buy our meat because they can relate to us. We are not just trying to sell them products, we are selling them healthy and quality meats at a fair price. We try to go the extra step to educate our customers on the benefits of grass-fed

organic meat and how eating good food can change your overall health." www.seibelsorganic.com.



Farm Sweet Farm Cadott, Wi

A 230 acre farm, they have been raising and selling grass-fed beef, pastured chicken, and free-range eggs for almost 20 years. They do not use growth hormones or antibiotics, but simply raise their animals as nature intended. They place a large emphasis on sustainable agriculture, taking into consideration the environment, the people in the community, and how it will affect them financially. Farm Sweet Farm also loves having customers visit the farm and truly get to know where their food comes from. You can buy meat in bulk, or in small poundage, just like you would see at the grocery store. Heather Flashinski, one of the owners and farmers, says, "We want people to feel comfortable with the meat and enjoy it. It's such a blessing over the years the number of people who come back saying they can't bring themselves to buy their meat anywhere else." www.farmsweetfarm.com

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- Meet the farmers
- Challenge us to keep doing better!



715.289.4896 FarmSweetFarm.com



Local Winter Farmers Markets

Chippewa Valley's Winter Farmers Market

March 2 & 16, April 6 | 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm

The Brewing Projekt | 1807 N Oxford, Eau Claire

Fresh local produce, baked goods, pasta, soap and much more. Browse local goods and enjoy a local craft beverage!

Menomonie Winter Farmers Market

March 9 & 23, April 6 & 20 | 9am to Noon

Raw Deal - 603 Broadway St S, Menomonie

Eggs, meats, cheese curds, canned goods, jams and jellies, honey, apple cider, microgreens, mushrooms, bakery, candles, soaps and lotions, and handmade crafts.

L.E. Phillips Senior Center Winter Farmers Market

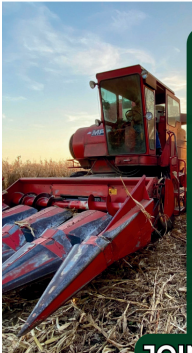
March 9 & April 13 | 8:30 am - 12:30 pm

L.E. Phillips Senior Center | 1616 Bellinger St, Eau Claire

Local vegetables, mushrooms, meats, eggs, bakery, honey, hummus, baba ghanouj, chips, maple syrup, beverages, dog treats, and more!

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Antitrust · Fair Legislative Maps
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Fresh, Local Mushrooms All Year Long

By Becky Streeter

If you're a mushroom-lover, or brave enough to try something new, you are in for a treat. Now you can purchase fresh, locally grown mushrooms all year long, right here in Eau Claire at Fun Guy Farm.

Steve Scholtz, owner and farmer of Fun Guy Farm, started growing mushrooms as a hobby. He had been foraging wild mushrooms for more than two decades when he learned about a technique to grow them indoors and all year long. No more waiting for the perfect time or conditions to go hunting, he could grow them in his own backyard shed! The new technique however, worked a little too well, and he had way more mushrooms than he could eat or give away. He started selling his excess at the Eau Claire Farmers Market, and experienced huge success, so he decided to open a business.

Fun Guy Farm, located in a warehouse on the north side of Eau Claire, opened mid-December in 2023 and, just as their reception at the farmers market, business has exceeded

expectations. They sell fresh mushrooms including oyster, lion's mane, chestnut, enoki, and king trumpet, as well as tinctures made from lion's mane, reishi, chaga turkey tail and maitake. They also offer dehydrated mushrooms, freeze-dried mushrooms, seasoning powders, supplements, and coffee, tea and gummies. If you're interested in trying your own hand at growing mushrooms, you can pick up cultivation supplies from the store, too.

Scholtz first became interested in growing his own mushrooms because of the natural, medicinal properties they provide when ingested. Scholtz says, "Our mushrooms are locally grown, healthy and fresh, offering many health benefits such as immune support, anti-inflammatory effect, helping to control blood sugar regulation and cholesterol. They also promote a healthy digestive tract by strengthening healthy gut microbes."

The mushrooms at Fun Guy Farm are also more flavorful than store-bought mushrooms. According to Scholtz, 90% of United States grown button, cremini and portobello mushrooms come from Pennsylvania and are shipped throughout the country. That means the product you purchase at the store is likely not very fresh. Scholtz says, "We have had many customers tell us they do not like mushrooms (while they reluctantly purchased mushrooms) only to return and become regular customers telling us how good our mushrooms are.

When that happens, we just smile and nod."

There is a noticeable difference between eating something the day it was picked versus days or weeks after it was picked, and people are definitely noticing at Fun Guy Farm.

So if you're looking to try something new, fresh and locally grown, head over to Fun Guy Farm at 2324 Western Avenue. You can also purchase items via their website Funguy-farm.com. The storefront is open from 10am-5pm Monday through Saturday, but since the farm is at the same location as the store, if the staff is on site, you can go in and take a look around. You will likely be leaving with some tasty, healthy and healthful products to which Scholtz will say as you go, "See you soon!"



Discovering Eco-Minded: Your Ultimate Sustainable Shopping Destination

In the era of climate change awareness and environmental consciousness, consumers are increasingly seeking ways to align their purchasing habits with their values. This shift has catalyzed the rise of eco-friendly stores in the Chippewa Valley such as Eco-Minded, a marketplace dedicated to sustainable products. With a mission to promote ethical consumption and mindful living, Eco-Minded offers a diverse range of eco-conscious goods, from fashion and beauty to home and lifestyle essentials.

One of the key features that sets Eco-Minded apart is its meticulous curation of items through the teamwork of owners, Geoff and Stacy Davis, and his four daughters as well as customer comments, thoughts, and suggestions.

Every product available is ensured it meets the team's sustainability criteria. From organic and ethically sourced materials to eco-friendly production processes, each item is chosen with the planet and its inhabitants in mind.

This commitment to quality and sustainability instills confidence in consumers, knowing that they can shop with a clear conscience.

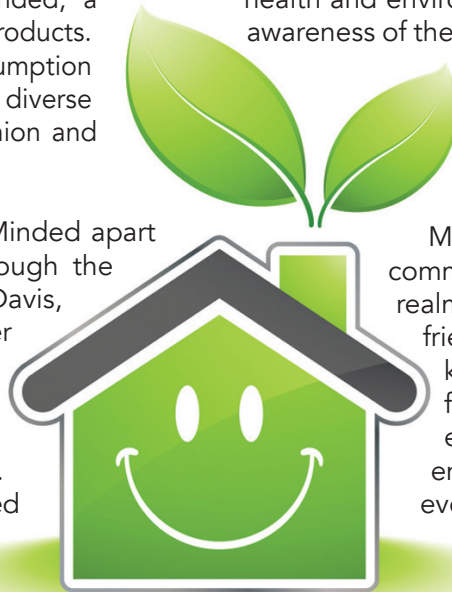
Eco-Minded's product selection encompasses various categories, catering to different aspects of sustainable living. Fashion enthusiasts can explore a range of clothing and accessories made from eco-friendly materials such as organic cotton, hemp, and bamboo. These stylish yet sustainable pieces allow individuals to express their personal style while minimizing their environmental footprint.

For beauty and personal care, Eco-Minded offers an array of natural skincare, haircare, and cosmetic products. Free from harsh chemicals and synthetic ingredients, these offerings prioritize both personal health and environmental preservation. With a growing awareness of the adverse effects of conventional beauty products on both individuals and the planet, Eco-Minded provides a refreshing alternative for conscious consumers.

Moreover, Eco-Minded extends its commitment to sustainability into the realm of home and lifestyle. From eco-friendly cleaning supplies and reusable kitchenware to zero-waste alternatives for everyday living, the platform empowers individuals to make environmentally responsible choices in every aspect of their lives.

By prioritizing products that minimize waste and resource consumption, Eco-Minded encourages a shift towards more sustainable lifestyles one small step at a time. When many people make small changes, big things can happen. Geoff likes to quote Anne Marie Bonneau who said it best, "We don't need a few people doing zero waste perfectly, we need millions of people doing it imperfectly."

So this Earth Day, stop by and make a first or continuing step in bettering your health, our community, and our world!



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Bring Your Old Electronics to First Choice Recycling

By Becky Streeter

As Americans, many of us love getting new electronics. The newest smartphone, smartwatch, laptop, tablet, TV, etc. "It's getting slow / old / cracked / broken—time for a new one!" But what do you do with the old one? Many of those types of electronics have your personal data on them, but that aside, they are terrible for the environment. A much better place for your old electronics is right here in your figurative, not literal, backyard: First Choice Recycling.

First Choice Recycling, located off Park Ridge Drive in the middle of Eau Claire, is a great place to recycle all your unwanted electronics. Their mission is to "work with our customers and downstream vendors together in partnership to protect the environment to the best of our ability. Repair when possible, reuse when possible and always recycle responsibly."

First Choice goes above and beyond basic certifications and industry standards to make sure they are the most environmentally friendly electronics disposal facility possible. They are an AAA certified member of NAID, the National Association for Information Destruction, which means they continually undergo a rigorous process ensuring compliance with all the governmental regulations surrounding information security. Many disposal companies ship their electronics to other companies or even overseas. This means your data changes hands more than once after it leaves you, with a greater potential to be stolen. You also don't know where your old device is going (perhaps just a landfill after all) or when it may or may not be destroyed. And it leaves an additional carbon footprint because of its extra travel. First Choice takes care of everything in-house.

According to Ralph Hutchens, First Choice Recycling's CEO and partner, "Our number one goal is that data destruction is done correctly. People should be worried about how they are disposing of their data, especially in this age where people are out to steal information. We destroy any data collected here on site—that includes hard drives, cell phones, tablets, anything. You bring it in, it gets locked up, then we wipe the data, and shred the device here. It never leaves this building."

First Choice is also extremely environmentally friendly. They are R2-v3 certified, which is the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) gold standard certification of best-practices for operational and environmentally minded electronics recycling and repair. Electronics and batteries do not break down in landfills. Instead, they

leech acid and chemicals as they corrode, contaminating the groundwater. Hutchens states, "Nothing that enters First Choice Recycling ever goes on to a landfill. If we can't repair or reuse an item, we repurpose as many parts of it as we can. If we can't repurpose it, we recycle it—shred it and reintroduce it into the manufacturing stream as raw components of copper, plastics, glass, and freon. We divert millions of pounds away from landfills every year." First Choice is audited several times per year to make sure they remain compliant with their strict certifications. Because of this, Hutchens feels confident in saying, "We are the greenest company in the Chippewa Valley."

First Choice also accepts large appliances in addition to electronics. You can swing by to drop off your broken microwave or old washing machine six days a week, and they will even unload it for you. They take almost everything for free, with the exception of large exercise equipment and freon appliances such as refrigerators, for which there is a disposal fee. Additionally, all Eau Claire County residents can drop off any type of battery free of charge.

For more information about their best practices or items you can recycle at First Choice, visit their website at firstchoicerecycling.com.



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The Girl Scout Cookie Program | Unbox the Future

The annual Girl Scout Cookie Program isn't just about delicious treats; it's about empowering Girl Scouts with essential life skills and shaping their futures. This year's theme, "Unbox the Future," resonates deeply, highlighting the program's transformative impact on Girl Scouts and their communities. As Girl Scouts participate in this highly anticipated event, they embark on a journey of entrepreneurship and honing skills like goal setting, decision making, and money management, which are crucial for their personal and professional growth.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program is a platform for Girl Scouts to flex their entrepreneurial muscles. It allows them to fully break free from societal constraints and explore their potential. By selling cookies, they not only learn the basics of business but also challenge social barriers that often confine them. They emerge as bold, goal-oriented individuals, paving the way for a more equitable future for themselves and society.

The Girl Scout Cookie Program is pivotal in shaping the next generation of leaders. Through this initiative, girls acquire invaluable skills that transcend beyond cookie sales. From earning badges in financial literacy to developing entrepreneurial understanding, they build courage, confidence, and character, preparing them for success in various aspects of life.

Furthermore, the proceeds from cookie sales directly benefit the local council and troops, fueling a plethora of enriching experiences for local Girl Scouts. These funds support service projects, troop travel, and summer camps, providing Girl Scouts opportunities for personal and collective growth.

The 2024 lineup includes fan favorites such as Thin Mints, Caramel deLites, Peanut Butter Patties, Adventurefuls, Toast-Yay, Lemonades, Peanut Butter Sandwich, and Trefoils.

Buying Girl Scout Cookies is more than just a transaction; it's an investment in the future. Each purchase contributes to the empowerment of Girl Scouts, enabling them to make tangible contributions to their communities and beyond. By supporting the Girl Scout Cookie Program, communities uphold the values of inclusivity and empowerment, fostering an environment where Girl Scouts can thrive and realize their potential.

A beacon of empowerment, the Girl Scout Cookie Program continues to offer Girl Scouts the tools they need to unlock boundless opportunities. Embrace this year's "Unbox the Future" theme and rally behind our local Girl Scouts,

supporting them in their entrepreneurial endeavors. Together, we can pave the way for a brighter, more equitable future—one cookie at a time.

How to Purchase Girl Scout Cookies This Year

If you know a registered Girl Scout, reach out to them to find out how they are selling cookies. If you don't know a Girl Scout, visit girlscoutcookies.org and use the Girl Scout Cookie Finder to find a local cookie booth and purchase cookies.

Customers who do not know a Girl Scout can purchase cookies to be shipped directly to their homes by entering their zip code into the Girl Scout Cookie Finder. At girlscoutcookies.org, you can find a local booth, purchase cookies, and/or donate cookies for local community causes.

Text COOKIES to 59618 to stay informed about how to purchase Girl Scout Cookies and other exciting Girl Scout news.



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Parenting and Resilience with Suggestions

By Erin Kaspar-Frett, CPM, LM, MSM
Abundant Moon Birth & Wellness LLC



.....
Stress definition (according to Webster Dictionary):

1. Pressure or tension exerted on a material object
2. A state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances

Both definitions fit parenting, right?

At this point in our lives, we have heard the effect of chronic stress so often we may start believing there is no hope. In the short term: heart rate increases, adrenaline and cortisol are released and arouse the sympathetic nervous system while reducing the parasympathetic nervous system, digestion slows down, sweating ensues, and pulse and blood pressure increase. The long-term impact of chronic stress is associated with glucose metabolism issues, heart attacks, cancer, mood disorders and other ills. So how do we build resilience as parents, rather than JUST survival?

Stress is neither good nor bad. It simply is. What we do with the excess and how we balance the hormones created determines whether the impact is helpful or harmful. Stress does have some benefits. It helps us focus, run faster, move more quickly. As a midwife, I am very appreciative for my stress response when I need to act quickly or use my muscles. The stress response literally saves lives at times: the child that runs toward the street, or the ability to lift something heavier than our usual limits in an emergency.

Stress elimination, in fact, is not likely possible. We might have financial strain, children with needs, co-parenting (you know, that person that you got into this job with) or single parenting difficulties, health issues, generational stress, and more. We can't do much about most of those. You can certainly make changes to reduce extra stress, but that alone is not the answer.

Rather than trying to reduce stress, I suggest stress resilience. Find the things that fill your cup. Retrain your focus onto the little things that bring you joy and allow gratitude to permeate your being. That does not mean ignoring the needs of your neighbors, family and friends in order to put yourself first. There is a time and a place for someone else's needs to come before yours, but not continuously.



Stress hormones are balanced in several ways: moderate exercise, mindful breathing, prayer and meditation, adequate sleep, nutritious caloric intake, comfortable social time (not anxiety-producing social time), support, and others. You could do self-care, such as spa day or massage, but those may not be realistic, feasible or even desirable right now. Instead, create a daily routine with the small things that bring you joy: touching base with a trusted friend, a good movie or book, a good cry, a bath or alone time. Sometimes it's simply refocusing yourself, like appreciating your child's laughter, even if there's a mess to deal with.

It's okay to take time and respond to your changing needs in resilience, just as you would respond to your child's changing needs. Then you can focus on gratitude for what IS going well. This may be impossible during times of crisis or increased stress, but try to do it when you can.

Breathe. Take a moment to breathe in and out of your heart space, think of something pleasant, and do your best to feel it. Research shows that simply just breathing makes a difference on the stress response of the body.



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Benefits of Reiki

Mom's Self-care for Postpartum Depression



By Sandra Anderson R.M, KT, ChT,
Reiki-Intuitive-Life-Spiritual Coach



Becoming a parent changes everything. It is a beautiful experience for many mothers—it tugs the heart strings, tests your patience and teaches many lessons. As a mother, wife, sister, grandparent and long-time Reiki healer, I have seen mothers who love their children become emotionally and physically exhausted as they begin to deal with the frustrations in navigating their role of mother/caregiver/wife while working in or outside the home. Let's be real: mothers have one of the most difficult jobs on the planet. It is a 24/7 life-changing experience whether it is with one child or more. Multitasking becomes their art, but it all takes a toll on mom's self-care. That's why many women suffer from postpartum depression, stress, and anxiety after childbirth.

Today we are fortunate to have alternative therapies like Reiki that can help in supporting the body's natural healing and relaxation processes. Reiki's comforting energy helps stimulate and enhance the body's own natural healing abilities. It gently brings the body back into balance and alignment. The deep relaxing nature of Reiki is calming, and it can help reduce the stress response and promote sleep.

Reiki therapy and other energy modalities have become well-known and popular over the years and can help

reduce stress and anxiety, especially for new mothers and fathers. In a 2011 study through the University of London, patients underwent two to eight weeks of 30-minute Reiki sessions. The study found those participants that were experiencing high levels of anxiety and depression experienced improvement in mood (pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21584234/).

Benefits of Reiki for new mothers include:

- **Reducing perceptions of stress** - My Reiki clients report the triggers to stress become less of a problem and they are better able to cope. They feel at peace and rested. Stress is one of the key factors that contributes postpartum depression in new moms, and relieving stress could help improve their symptoms.
- **Connecting with another (adult) person**- New moms suffering with postpartum depression often feel alone and withdrawn, not connected to the people around them. This one-on-one attention may help them feel more present and connected to the world.
- **More autonomy** - After baby is born, moms can feel as though they have no real control of their lives. Planning and receiving personal sessions allows them to feel more active in their self-care, which can alleviate some of the symptoms they are feeling.
- **A chance to really relax** - Regular Reiki appointments give mom "me time" to relax and recharge. This is especially helpful to the new mothers who may have depression and feelings of anxiety. With regular Reiki sessions, clients report better mental and physical health, as well as regaining a sense of inner balance and well-being.

If you are curious in learning more about Reiki, or to schedule a session, you can contact me and I would happy to help. Sandra Anderson: www.sandi-anderson.com or 715-456-1391.

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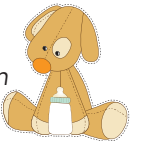
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A Love Letter to All the Sleep-Deprived Parents

By Kate Kleven



Hey there, tired friends. I'm Kate, a Certified Breastfeeding Specialist and Baby-Led Sleep and Wellbeing Specialist.

I am a wife, a daughter, a friend, and a mother to two active boys, and I live with my family in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. I love being outside as well as cooking (when I don't have to do it every day), and my hobbies include showering alone, taking naps, watching any TV besides *Paw Patrol*, and trying to keep my plants alive.

I'm not in this work because I have all the answers to parenting and sleep figured out.

Not at all.

Truthfully, my experiences in early motherhood were immensely difficult when it came to sleeping and feeding. My firstborn did not sleep well until after he turned two, due to underlying health issues, and my second was not much better.

I wish I could have been given accurate information about normal infant sleep, help understanding the cause of sleeplessness, and encouragement in nurturing my tiny human all day and night.

Because sleep deprivation is wildly disheartening!

I remember how lonely, anxious, and vulnerable I felt when it came to discussing our sleep with other people, and now I am thrilled to offer compassionate and practical support to parents in a similar place.

I believe that, while I might have a lot of education on infant feeding and sleep, parents are the absolute experts on their unique baby and on themselves!

I also believe that sleep training is not the answer. By "sleep training" I am referring to cry-it-out method, AND any other approach that pushes a baby toward independence too early, that requires parents to override their instincts to respond to their baby, or that desensitizes a baby to their **biological need for attachment.**

Sleep is not a behavior we can control or train, but rather is a neurological process that happens in a part of our brain we cannot access consciously.

Therefore, we need to first understand a baby's brain and biology if we are going to try to influence their nervous system toward rest.

Spoiler alert: one of the most powerful influences on your baby's nervous system is the nurturing relationship between the two of you.

THIS is the foundation of the sleep support I offer and is the reason your baby's attachment to you is of such importance to me.

In our work together, I will be encouraging you to **lean in** to your relationship with your child, and **tune in** to your own powerful instincts, as I give you practical strategies for improving sleep for all involved.

Whether you choose to work with me or not, I wish you better sleep, peaceful snuggles with your little(s) today, and joy on your parenting journey! ~ Kate



Kate Kleven is a Certified Breastfeeding Specialist, plus she holds a gentle infant sleep coaching credential from Isla-Grace. Through **Mama Bear Family Care**, Kate provides in-person support alongside the IBCLC's, online support for clients via messaging portal, plus virtual visits for sleep. She also leads various free support groups and gives the best hugs.

Learn more about Kate and the Mama Bear team:
www.MamaBearFamilyCare.com.





A Mindful Approach to Pregnancy

By Ann Brand

Twenty-five years ago, during my first pregnancy, finding information on all the possible experiences of pregnancy and childbirth was different than it is today. There was only minimal internet, no social-media parenting influencers, no apps. Just me, my physician, and a well-worn copy of *What to Expect When Expecting*. Being pregnant for the first time, living far from family, was full of joy, excitement, overwhelmingness, and fear. Even events and experiences we welcome can be stressful. Cultivating tools to navigate the experiences of pregnancy and childbirth is a wonderful way to support yourself and baby in this exciting and unknown time.

As a mindfulness practitioner and teacher, I recognize how useful my meditation practice could have been during my pregnancies, including my miscarriage. Anytime is the right time to start a mindfulness practice. It is never too late. Here are some reasons why starting a mindfulness practice during pregnancy can be beneficial for all parents.

- Mindfulness practice helps us manage stress, anxiety, and other negative emotions. It is normal to feel stress and worry when we are in new and uncertain experiences, like pregnancy and childbirth, and it is also essential to find ways to bring care and ease to these experiences. Mindfulness can support us in calming the stress.
- Mindfulness practice supports breath awareness. Working skillfully with the breath is a wonderful aid for both pregnancy and childbirth. It helps us to manage our anxiety and stay present to fully participate in the pregnancy and birth process. When we practice mindful breathing, we increase our capacity to use our breath in skillful ways.
- Mindfulness supports us in navigating the knowns and unknowns of pregnancy and childbirth. It is easy to go down the rabbit hole of the internet, unearthing everything that could possibly go wrong, and then getting stuck in that anxiety spiral. With mindful awareness, we can see more clearly what is helpful and what is creating stress, and then shift our attention in kind and healthy ways for us and baby.

- Mindfulness practice supports us in staying present to what matters through the joys and challenges of pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting. When we practice mindfulness, we grow in awareness of where we are placing our attention. This helps us make skillful decisions and stay in tune with what supports us and brings ease.

With the deluge of information out there, set the intention to start small as you explore how mindfulness can support you in pregnancy and childbirth. Even a few minutes a day of mindful breathing can bring ease and clarity to support you in this time of excitement and uncertainty. Maybe you try a meditation app, or read a book on mindful pregnancy and parenting, or take a mindfulness class.

There is no right or wrong way to begin. And you can't begin too late. Now is the perfect time to start. And remember, you can always begin again with the next breath.



Joyce Sobotta
Published Author: *Breast Health Is in Your Hands*
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When It Comes to Birth, Position Is Key, and CHIROPRACTIC CAN HELP!



By Emily Smith Nguyen, Smith & Prissel Chiropractic and Massage

I don't know about you, but I've made far too many residential moves in my life. If you've ever been blessed to help move a big piece of furniture down a tight stairwell, you understand the importance of knowing the furniture's position and where the stairwell bends/twists. With this in mind, now picture a baby descending down through the mom's pelvis in the process of being born. Though the mere inches a baby travels may seem like a short trip, the position of a baby and the alignment of the mom's pelvis can make that short distance last hours, if not days. The inability of a baby to move effectively through the birth canal contributes to nearly a third of all births ending with a c-section.

As a Chiropractic Pediatric Specialist, I often work with a mom throughout pregnancy to ensure her body is ready for the birth process. The pelvis is made up of three bones: the sacrum and two ilium. The position of these three bones, relative to each other, determines the space available for a baby to transition through in order to be born.

Things that happened in the past, or things we do every day without thinking, contribute to the alignment of the pelvis, before, during and after pregnancy:

- Accidents and falls, especially ones that involve landing on the sacrum/tailbone, can alter the alignment of the pelvis.
- Sitting/standing with poor posture. We sit a lot—to work, drive, relax, etc. Leaning to one side or tucking a leg(s) underneath you can cause imbalance in the pelvis.
- Carrying heavy items (purse, bag, toddler, etc.) on one side. This can be hard on your body at any time, but especially disastrous while pregnant because of ligament laxity and joint instability.
- Crossing your legs. We do it without thinking, and often it feels more "normal" on one side, which can create imbalance in the pelvis if done regularly.

It's important to understand the role the baby plays in the birth process as well. Position matters! The uterus, which houses the baby during pregnancy, is anchored to the pelvis by ligaments. If the pelvis is twisted, the uterus will also be twisted. Baby's job is

to be positioned head down and chin tucked. If a baby is breech (head up) prior to delivery, it's possible that realigning the pelvis with chiropractic adjustments may help the baby get into, and stay in, a head down position. The occiput (back of baby's head) should be in front and the baby should be facing the mom's back (known as 'Occiput Anterior'). This is the 'easiest' position for mom because the baby's soft face is against mom's hard sacrum. If the baby is positioned where the back of the skull is against mom's hard sacrum ('Occiput Posterior'), it is often referred to as "sunny side up", but there is nothing 'sunny' about it because this position may lead to a longer and harder delivery with more back pain.

Chiropractic care is helpful for people of all ages, and is especially beneficial during pregnancy. Receiving chiropractic adjustments to align the bones of the pelvis makes pregnancy more enjoyable and increases labor and delivery success.





Babies Grow So Quickly - Don't Miss the Good Stuff!

By Melinda Gardner, Apple Pregnancy Care Center

This morning, one of the mothers we serve at APPLE was in the Center with her brand new baby. It was so special to see her with him--she was absolutely madly in love with this tiny boy. She actually said, "I thought I knew what love was, but having this little guy made me realize what love really is." She is overwhelmed, tired, not getting a lot of sleep, and all she can think of is how much she loves her baby and wants to take care of him. All of her priorities have changed.

Children are such a gift. They really do make us see the world in a different way. I love watching little kids learn and play and enjoy life. Our newest granddaughter is six months old and every day she is doing something different and new. It's so special and fun to see.

Life is so busy and intense. How do we slow down and look for the good stuff? We need to be intentional. We need to connect with the people around us. We need to spend our time on what is important. Life goes by so quickly. What are the things in your life that you want to spend more time doing? Who are the people you love and want to spend more time with?

What are the things we can do as parents to make our homes a better refuge for our families? Maybe it's learning a new skill with your kids, like baking a loaf of bread together, or making a pizza. Maybe it's bringing out some paints and doing art together. (I know - both of those things make a mess, but that is where memories are made.)

I have a friend who used to take her kids out in the woods for a walk. They carried bags to bring home leaves or rocks or acorns. It was always a treasure hunt and an adventure and learning experience for them all. And it's free.

I hope this new year will be one of happiness and fun for you as a parent. We know it's difficult—especially for

single parents. But, there is a place that can help.

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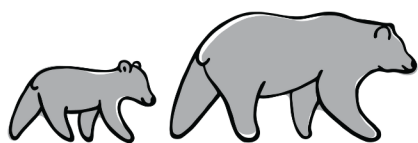
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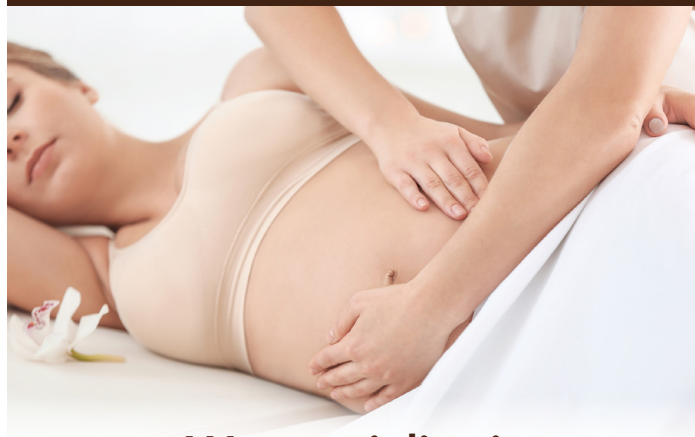


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