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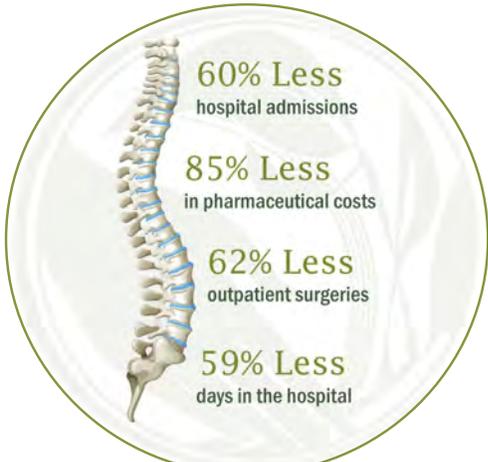
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hello  
Spring



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# Baby's First Adjustment By Smith & Prissel Chiropractic and Massage

Though my practice is full of patients of all ages, as a Chiropractic Pediatric Specialist, I often get asked why a baby would need to be adjusted. The answer is simple: They have a spine! Though we all have spines, the spine of a newborn is mostly cartilage. It takes about seven years for the very top bone of the spine, the atlas, to fully transform into bone. This process of permanently shaping the spine occurs in sequential order from the top to the bottom of the spine over the next 20+ years. Because of this, any altered positions of the spine can become permanent if not corrected when young, giving rise to the saying, "as the twig is bent, so grows the tree." Just like the rest of us, babies also need chiropractic care.

Babies may not spend hours looking down at a phone, trying to carry all the groceries in one trip, or shoveling the end of the driveway after the plow has gone through, but they often have other causes for their spinal misalignments. First of all: birth. We've all experienced it but we don't remember (for good reason) what it was like to be born. Even the most natural birth is still quite a process for mom and baby. It makes sense that a slow and drawn-out labor and delivery could be hard on the baby's tiny developing spine as it emerges, but a quick birth can also be traumatic as the baby doesn't have a chance to change position to avoid jamming their spine.

Once the baby is on the outside, there are a variety of spinal injuries that can occur. Balancing a heavy head atop a weak neck can lead to preferences of holding the head or turning the head to only one direction. If not corrected, this can lead to fussiness, facial asymmetries, delayed

developmental milestones, and possible spinal issues down the road.

When evaluating a baby for chiropractic care, I look for any signs of asymmetry in the movement of the baby's arms, legs or spine. Everything should be moving symmetrically and if it is not, it is addressed. These differences from right to left are subtle and may not initially be noticed by attentive parents or well-meaning pediatricians. Chiropractors are trained to identify these asymmetries and correct them, even in the smallest of spines.

It is important that you minimize the likelihood of a baby developing a preference by:

- Changing how they are held when being fed or bounced
- Switching the way they are positioned in their crib (because they will watch for you to enter the room)
  - Changing which way they look when watching an older sibling play

Supporting the head while traveling in a car seat can also help, because otherwise the head can fall to one side and the spine will be bounced out of alignment. It's no wonder that some babies hate their car seat!

Other common reasons I see babies in my office are for issues associated with their latch/eating, difficulty with bowel movements, or overall fussiness. Having older siblings can also contribute to spinal issues for the baby, whether you saw something happen or just heard the cry and are thinking the worst. Luckily, a well-trained chiropractor can assess and correct these little problems before they become big issues.



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# Comfort in the Chaos: Infant Massage and the Truth That Hard Times Pass

By Angie Sutliff, CIMI

My grandma raised eleven children. Because of her depth of experience, I would occasionally share with her one of my parenting woes when my four children were young. Whether it was bedwetting, tantrums, or colic, her response was the same: "Don't worry, they won't be doing that when they're in college."

At the time, I didn't find this helpful. I was hoping for some quick solution – a tip or trick to carry me out of a problem I couldn't solve.

As a parent of a baby or young child, some things feel like they'll never end – diapering, crying spells, grocery store tantrums, bedtime battles, and sleepless nights. It can all feel so overwhelming in the moment.

What I came to realize about my grandma's wisdom is that some of the things I worried so much about would go away quite naturally with time.

Just like the soft, snuggly newborn stage, or the sweet little mispronounced words don't last, most of the troubles we experience in parenting won't either. They're all just seasons and opportunities to connect with our little ones and to grow our skills as parents.

Infant massage helps us slow down, take deep breaths, and connect with our little ones. It's a communication-focused time of relaxation

and connection that provides long-lasting benefits to both baby and parent.

Can infant massage bring relief from crying spells, digestive issues, and teething pain? Yes, and so much more. But what it really does is help us to communicate with our babies through their first language – the language of touch.

Raising children is far more than just solving all the problems and reaching some perceived finish line. It's about building a family, connecting, and finding ways to grow together through the difficulties.

Now that my own children are grown, my grandma's words make a lot more sense to me. I realize now that things that seemed like a big deal or never-ending at the time really weren't.

In the meantime, there are steps we can take to make the season of life a little easier. We can promote better sleep and learn new ways to comfort and manage colic.

But whether we succeed or not in solving these problems in the moment, we know that none of them lasts forever. As my grandma used to say, "They won't be doing that when they're in college." And it's true.

Angie Sutliff is a Certified Infant Massage Instructor through Loving Touch International. She cares deeply about helping parents and babies find deeper connections through the practice of baby and toddler massage.

To learn more about massaging your baby for better sleep habits, digestion, connection, and bonding, contact Angie Sutliff at [doulaforyou@gmail.com](mailto:doulaforyou@gmail.com). Angie offers one-on-one and small group massage classes for babies, toddlers, and their caregivers.



# Midwifery Care

by Erin Kaspar-Frett, CPM, LM, MSM

Not all midwives are the same, just like not all doctors are the same, or all plumbers. Some claim the title "traditional midwife," which can mean many things to different people. Some have training only in medical settings (hospitals or medical birth centers) and they would practice similarly to an OB, who likes the latest advances and might use more interventions.

Most midwives, however, land somewhere in the middle.

A "traditional midwife" is often trained by those in their community, has perhaps not attended school for midwifery, and may or may not have taken the certification exam. This person could be licensed by the state, or not. They may use only non-medical techniques or advise. As such, there is some debate about what constitutes a tradition for a midwife in our region and who should hold that title.

A medical-minded midwife generally has attended school, may use interventions regularly (breaking water, regular cervical checks, hands-on delivery only, etc.) and does so with the best interest of their patient or client in mind.

The term "lay midwife" is often incorrectly used and has mostly been removed from terminology.

The Midwives Model of Care focuses on communication with the person pregnant and giving birth, while monitoring for changes in status that would warrant more interventions. Each experience is tailored to the person in front of the midwife. Informed choice is often employed. However, these statements are fairly broad and can be applied and interpreted in many ways. How do we monitor? What is it that warrants "more interventions"? And how do we know whom to trust?

I have always loved the phrase "I trust birth," and while that is mostly true as a statement, in practice it is more about respecting birth. We have to trust that there will be signs to watch for if human intervention is needed to safeguard the parent or the baby, while

knowing that we can't always control the outcome. I do trust birth but also know that sometimes things happen. As a pregnant person, you can eat all the right things and do all the right exercises and believe all the right thoughts while using all the right affirmation, and still sometimes things happen that are out of our control. This is why our skills must stay up to date.

In our practice, we like to look for pink flags so that we aren't waiting for a red flag before doing more. Our favorite births are the ones in which we do very little but sit in reverent patience with the emerging family. However, we work hard to keep our skills sharp so we can use them if we do need to jump in because a cord is wrapped, or baby needs help coming out or breathing once out, or to prevent a parent from bleeding too much. We react to what we see at the present rather than ahead of the signs.

We want each family to choose what is best for them within the bounds of safety. We want to have the time to calmly discuss options, but also to be able to act quickly when needed.

We also strive to share with clients what the choices are in different settings, especially in the mainstream hospital clinic setting. Because, truly, how can anyone make an informed choice if they aren't given all the options and as much information as possible with which to make them.

Birth choices are about as personal as things can be. Whatever choice a parent makes, we hope that it is made with all the information available.

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# Luonto ja Rauha: Why the Woods Might Be the Best Medicine for Your Busy Mind

By Elizabeth Berry, MA, MSE, LPCIT Psychotherapist  
& Owner, Atlas Counseling

Here in the Midwest, we have a special reverence for going “up North.” Whether it’s opening the cabin for the season, taking a walk along the river, or just sitting on the back porch watching the robins return, we know instinctively that fresh air does something good for the soul.

With Earth Day around the corner, I’ve been thinking about a beautiful Finnish phrase: *Luonto ja rauha*. It translates simply to “nature and calm.”

For those of us with ADHD or “busy brains”—the kind that feel like a web browser with 47 tabs open and music playing from somewhere you can’t find—this concept isn’t just poetry. It’s a prescription.

## The “Green” Reset Button

Have you ever noticed that the hum of the refrigerator or the ding of your phone seems to grate on your nerves, but the sound of wind in the pines or waves hitting the shore feels like a lullaby?

There is a scientific reason for this. Our modern world is full of “hard attention”—traffic lights, emails, scrolling news feeds. It demands constant, draining focus. For the neurodivergent mind, which already struggles to filter out noise, this leads to rapid battery drainage.

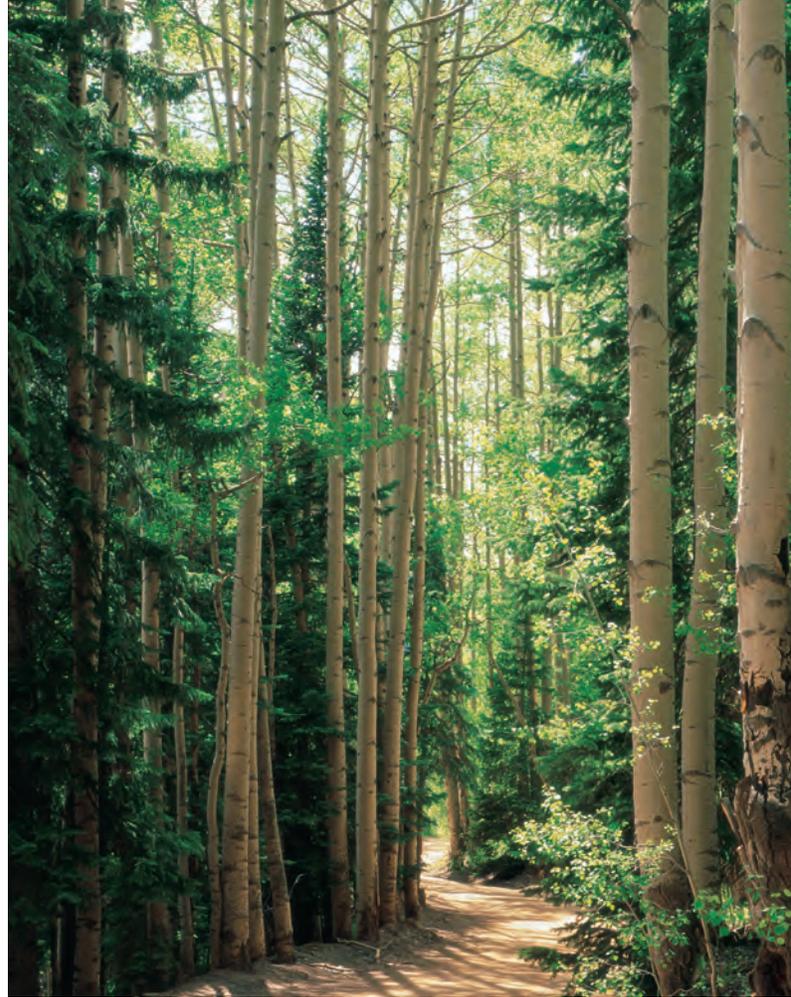
Nature, however, offers what psychologists call “soft fascination.” The movement of leaves or the ripple of a lake engages the brain without demanding effort. It gives your “focus muscles” a chance to rest and recover. It’s like finally turning off that noisy vacuum cleaner that’s been running in the background of your mind all day.

## The Lake as a Therapist

For the ADHD nervous system, nature is the ultimate regulator.

- **Forests (Green Space):** Being among trees lowers cortisol (stress hormones) almost instantly. It’s a natural “anxiety medication” without the pharmacy line.
- **Water (Blue Space):** Staring at a lake or river induces a meditative state. It slows down the racing thoughts that usually keep us up at night making to-do lists.

You don’t need to hike the Ice Age Trail with a 40-pound pack to get these benefits. *Luonto ja rauha* can be found in small moments. It’s the resilience built in the quiet.



## A New Earth Day Tradition

Do you ever think about how the planet can save you? If your brain feels cluttered and your fuse feels short, try a little “nature therapy.”

1. **Porch Sitting:** Leave the phone inside. Just sit for 10 minutes. Watch the squirrels. Let your mind wander off the leash.
2. **Get Your Hands Dirty:** Digging in the garden isn’t just a chore; the sensory experience of soil and plants is incredibly grounding for the ADHD body.
3. **Find the Quiet:** Drive to a spot where the only noise is the birds. Turn the car off. Roll the windows down. Breathe.

We often think of “resilience” as being tough and powering through. But true resilience—especially for us—is knowing when to stop, step outside, and let the quiet of the earth do the heavy lifting for a while.

**About the Author:** Elizabeth Berry, MA, MSE, LPC-IT is a psychotherapist and the owner of Atlas Counseling. Specializing in the “internal architecture” of the neurodivergent mind, Elizabeth helps women navigate the complexities of ADHD through a lens of stabilization and self-compassion. Based in Wisconsin, when she isn’t in the office, you can find her in her own “creative workshop” at home, likely working on a crochet project or planning her next outdoor adventure.

# Preparing for Motherhood with Confidence:

## How Thermography Supports You Before and After Pregnancy

By Thermography of Wisconsin



**M**otherhood is a tender and powerful season of life. As you prepare for a new little one—or adjust after pregnancy and breastfeeding—it's natural to wonder, "How is my body doing?" Thermography offers a gentle, radiation-free way to look at your breast and overall wellness at two important times: before pregnancy and breastfeeding, and no sooner than three months after they are complete.

At Thermography of Wisconsin, we honor safety, comfort and timeliness of screening. Breast thermography is not suitable during pregnancy or breastfeeding because of normal hormone changes. Instead, we focus on serving you well before conception and after your body has fully transitioned post-nursing.

Why consider thermography before pregnancy? The time before pregnancy is an ideal window to understand your "starting point." A pre-pregnancy thermogram can help reveal:

- Inflammation patterns
- Lymph congestion
- Vascular changes that may affect comfort and wellness

This becomes your baseline and a reference point with which you and your health team can look back on with confidence.

Pregnancy and nursing are seasons of major hormonal and physiological change. Your breasts are actively responding to your baby's needs. By waiting a full three months after pregnancy and breastfeeding, your breast tissue has time to stabilize, allowing for a more accurate and meaningful thermographic study.

Three months after you've completed pregnancy and breastfeeding, breast thermography becomes a valuable tool again. By comparing your new scan with your pre-pregnancy baseline, a trained thermologist can identify improvements, changes, or areas that may need attention. Many women appreciate the peace of mind that comes from monitoring their wellness in this way.

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Thermography of Wisconsin serves patients in Central and Northern Wisconsin and Minnesota.

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# Postpartum Reawakening

by Iris Casey - Mother Essence Postpartum Care

Postpartum is the time after birth when a woman undergoes physical, mental, emotional and spiritual transformation and healing, all while getting to know her new baby and discovering herself as a mother. In the Western world, our culture has a “bounce back” mentality: focusing on the baby over the mother and pressuring mothers to return to “normal.” The expectation is that mothers can do everything themselves, without need for physical and social support.

Yet our ancestors, and many traditional cultures today, understood something we often forget: the profound importance of caring for mothers after birth. Across cultures, specific details vary but the core themes are shared. Postpartum is treated as a sacred time with specific rituals and practices to care for the new mother.

Please join me on a journey of postpartum reawakening as we remember the value of support, rest, and nourishment for new mothers.

## Support

Support is traditionally provided by extended female family members or other women who often move in to provide physical support, emotional care and guidance. This is known as *mothering the new mother*.

### What you can do:

- Make a postpartum support plan—it’s just as important as a birth plan
- Enlist family, friends, and/or hire a support person, such as a doula
- Find local or virtual postpartum or moms’ groups

## Rest

Depending on the culture, the period of rest lasts from 21 days to 6 weeks. During this time, the mother is encouraged to bond with her baby and limit other responsibilities while her support village handles household tasks and cares for older children.

### What you can do:

- Make a list of tasks your village can help with while you rest
- Hire support for household chores, childcare, or overnight support
- Give yourself permission to rest and let go of your to-do list

## Nourishment

Each culture prepares specific foods, drinks and herbs to support healing and promote milk production. Postpartum meals are warm, nutrient-dense, and easy to digest. This is important because pregnancy

and birth depletes nutrient stores, and digestion naturally slows after birth. Broths, soups, soft grains and tender meats are common staples. Typical “health” foods like salads, raw fruits or vegetables, and smoothies are avoided because they are cold and difficult to digest.



### What you can do:

- Prep and freeze postpartum-friendly meals before baby arrives—consider having a meal prep party with friends
- Start a “Meal Train” and let your village support you ([mealtrain.com](http://mealtrain.com))
- Hire someone to make meals for you and your family

Reclaiming these postpartum practices has the power to transform individual mothers, their families, and our communities. Share the “Postpartum Reawakening” message with the women in your life! If you are not in the birthing or postpartum season, consider supporting someone who is—make them a meal, offer support, or simply lend a listening ear.

**Every mother deserves to be honored, nourished and supported while she turns her mind, body and heart over to the new baby she brought into the world.**

# Pregnancy is a Teacher by TruLiving Birth Center

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**Y**ou are looking at a positive pregnancy test and trying to wrap your mind around this new and wonderful information. You share the news with family and friends, who give loving, but sometimes opposing advice. You turn to the internet and social media, and things can feel either overly simplified or overly complicated. How is something this natural so potentially confusing?

Pregnancy can be a time of deep learning, not only about the physical process of gestation and birth, but about yourself, your values, and your relationships with yourself and others. From the very practical to

the deeply personal, your pregnancy is an amazing teacher.

First confirming your pregnancy can be a joyous and exciting moment. It can also feel like being strapped into an amusement park ride as it pulls away from the platform and realizing that you are in for the ride, whatever it becomes. You may go through a range of emotions: joy, fear, resistance, wonder, excitement, numbness, ambivalence, denial, happiness and overwhelm; all normal feelings. Your life is about to change.

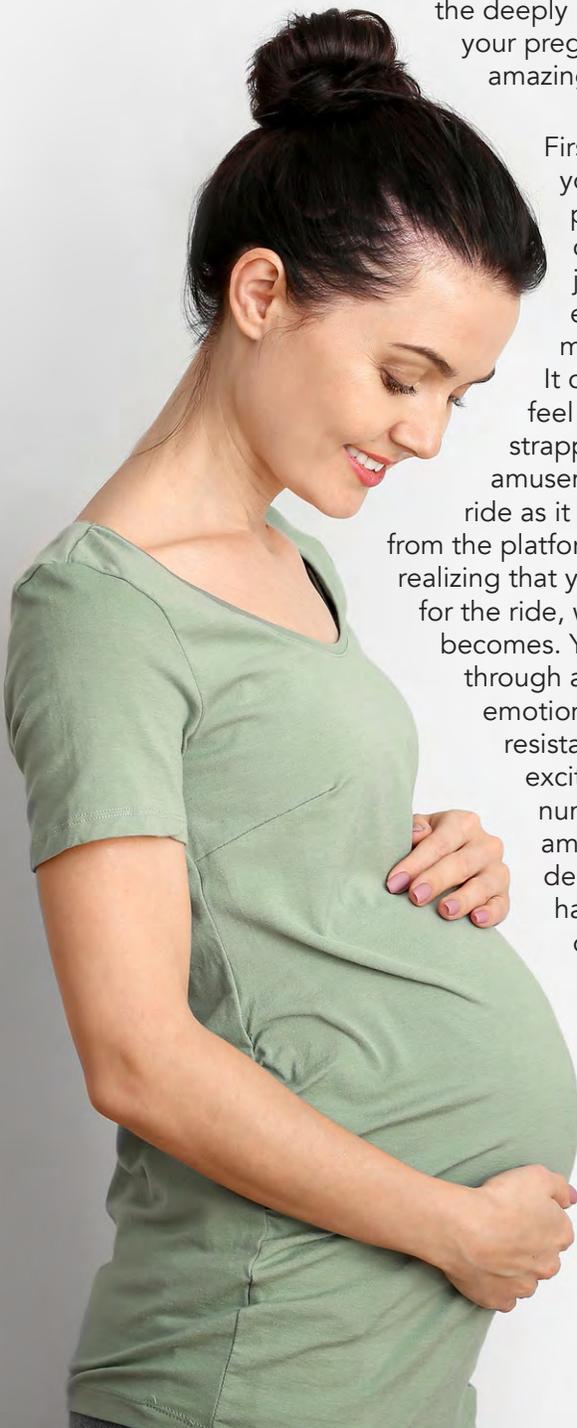
It is important, in early pregnancy, for soon-to-be parents to seek out community at this time. You need a care community, which may consist of a midwife or doctor, nutritionist, perinatal fitness instructor, doula, and childbirth educator. And you may need a new social support community like a parenting group, a spiritual community, or new friends, or you can reconnect to old friends with children. Choose both virtual and real-life connections to support you during this sensitive time.

Early pregnancy often includes discomforts you may have heard about: soreness, food aversions, vomiting and/or nausea, or fatigue. Each of these is a teacher as well. These messages from your body may be telling you to prioritize self-care, recommit to healthy living, and make sure you are getting deep rest. As a parent, both during pregnancy and the first years of parenting, you will be navigating the sharing of your body, your space, and your time, and learning to accept the reality of a new way of living with your expanded family, responsibilities, and priorities.

Later pregnancy may include late night trips to the bathroom, slowing down your work schedule, or a need for special care like chiropractic and massage. These lessons from your body may be preparing you for late night feedings, sleeping when you can, leaning into the schedule set by baby and making it work, or prioritizing yourself when necessary, so you can continue the important work of nurturing your newborn.

Congratulations on your pregnancy! Whether this is your first, or another addition to your family, I hope you seek out useful information and support. Take classes, read, get to know other parents, join a support group, or try something new. Learn about the many decisions you are asked to make, look at all sides of the topic, and find what resonates with you. You are the perfect parent for your baby.

Nicole Wocelka is a mother, midwife, and herbalist from New Richmond, Wisconsin. She is one of the providers at TruLiving Birth Center in Menomonie, Wisconsin. You can learn more about midwifery services at the birth center at [www.trulivingbirthcenter.com](http://www.trulivingbirthcenter.com) or by emailing [info@trulivingbirthcenter.com](mailto:info@trulivingbirthcenter.com) and you can reach Nicole directly at [www.hasewinkle.com](http://www.hasewinkle.com)



# Rediscovering Comfort and Confidence in Pregnancy, Naturally

**How acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine are supporting local moms—and whole families—from preconception through every stage of life.**

*By Jamie Wilcox, Eau Claire Acupuncture*

Ask any expectant parent what they're not looking forward to in pregnancy, and the list will sound strangely familiar. It can include nausea that just won't quit, back pain that makes simple movements a chore, and headaches that linger because so many medications are off-limits. That's exactly where many families in our community are discovering something surprising and wonderfully supportive: the ancient practice of acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM).

At Eau Claire Acupuncture, the vibe isn't clinical or intimidating—it's grounded in care, curiosity, and partnership. Practitioners listen first, tailor treatments to each body and each stage of life, and work with you before you feel desperate for relief. "After about four months of treatment with Jamie, I became pregnant again, but this time was different," shares one mom who found balance and calm through her journey. "My emotions were far more manageable, and I felt mentally and physically prepared in a way I never had before."

Think of acupuncture as a gentle nudge toward equilibrium. Research shows acupuncture can positively influence pain pathways, improve circulation, and support nervous system regulation—all without introducing medications. It's one reason people turn to acupuncture for pregnancy-related nausea, which affects up to 70–80% of expectant moms, and often feel better equipped to eat, rest, and function more normally. While this piece isn't a research paper, a growing body of clinical evidence supports acupuncture as a safe, low-risk option for nausea and vomiting in pregnancy.

You don't have to save acupuncture just for uncomfortable symptoms. Starting around 34 weeks, many local families come in for labor-preparation care. This isn't about hastening your due date, it's about preparing your body and nervous system for the big day. Acupuncture at this stage supports pelvic alignment, hormonal signaling, and overall readiness. It helps you walk into labor feeling confident instead of anxious.

Another area where this approach really shines is in breech presentations. About 3–4% of babies are breech at term, which can lead to a lot of worry (and sometimes medical intervention). Traditional Chinese Medicine uses techniques like moxibustion alongside targeted acupuncture points to encourage optimal positioning. Over the past nine years, the clinic has seen a remarkable ~95% success rate helping breech babies turn—a testament to thoughtful protocols and collaborative prenatal care.



What many people are surprised to learn, though, is that acupuncture and TCM aren't just for pregnancy. While prenatal care is a meaningful part of the work, the foundation of Traditional Chinese Medicine is whole-body and whole-life care. Acupuncture is commonly used to support fertility and hormone balance, chronic pain, migraines, digestive concerns, stress and burnout, autoimmune and inflammatory conditions, and recovery from injury or illness. Rather than chasing isolated symptoms, TCM looks at patterns—the connections between sleep, digestion, stress, hormones, and pain—and treats the body as an integrated system.

That's what makes this medicine so powerful. Whether someone is trying to conceive, navigating pregnancy, managing chronic pain, or simply wanting to feel more at home in their body, acupuncture meets them where they are and helps restore balance from the inside out.

What's beautiful about this work isn't just the physical relief—it's the confidence and calm it brings. For people navigating seasons where so much feels out of control, acupuncture offers a space to be seen, heard, and supported on their own terms.

Curious if acupuncture could support your health during pregnancy or beyond? Learn more, or schedule a consultation, at Eau Claire Acupuncture. Discover how a holistic, individualized approach can support your body through every stage of life.

# Bone-on-Bone, Bulging Discs, and Arthritis

by Judy Soborowicz,  
Active Health Chiropractic



**W**e all know someone with pain due to arthritis, or perhaps you yourself have even been told that is the reason for your pain. Whether it's arthritis in your shoulder, a disc bulge in your low back, or a knee that is bone-on-bone. We discover there is an anatomical change in our bodies responsible for our pain. It is often described as wear-and-tear, or simply normal aging, and we are told there is not much that can be done. It is only a matter of time before surgery once we can't bear the pain anymore.

This story, despite being very common, is not quite the whole picture nor how the body functions. Anatomical changes like arthritis and disc bulges are not the cause of pain—rather, both are symptoms of nerve flow interference, correctable through chiropractic. In fact, many people have anatomical changes, like arthritis or a disc bulge, and seemingly experience no additional pain or symptoms. For example, a 2015 study in the American Journal of Neuroradiology found nearly one in three pain-free twenty-year-olds have a disc bulge, while a whopping two-thirds of people over sixty also have a disc bulge with no back pain.<sup>1</sup> That being said, we all know someone dealing with terrible pain who also has a disc bulge or arthritis. This happens because the pain, degeneration, disc bulges, and arthritis are all symptoms of the same cause: nerve flow interference. More specifically, nerve flow interference leading to reduced nerve system function.

Our nerve system is responsible for every function of our body including how we move and stabilize. Healthy nerve flow supports proper function, stabilizing and controlling our movements, which protects and heals our joints from the

wear and tear that leads to arthritis. In contrast, inadequate nerve flow leads to instability and more irritation on our joints, ultimately ending with what we call bone-on-bone, bulging disc, and arthritis. So, the reason many folks are able to live pain free with a disc bulge or arthritis, while others experience intense pain with little to no arthritis or degeneration, is nerve system health and functioning nerve flow. By looking beyond the painful disc bulge and toward our nerve system function as a whole, we can prevent and help reverse painful arthritis. So before resorting to major surgery for arthritis, many people look to chiropractic for help. Chiropractic is the only healthcare profession uniquely trained to detect interference and restore nerve system function.

The story of bone-on-bone, arthritis, and disc bulges is not a prophecy of inevitable surgery, and is not written in bone—it is composed in the stability of our nerve system. Each one of us is capable of improving nerve system function by reducing nerve flow interference, and restoring proper stability. Join the millions who have experienced the benefits of restoring nerve system function as the cause, and improving nerve flow through natural chiropractic.

1. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25430861/>

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# Cultivate Mindful Awareness This Spring

By Ann Brand

**A**s I sit down to write, snow is gently falling and we are deep in the stillness of winter. Nature is calling me to slow down and rest, yet my Instagram feed is telling me to set goals, get motivated, and radically improve myself. The wisdom of nature shows us that winter is the time to rest and reflect. All parts of nature need rest, including humans. Nature is not just about stillness, however. The cycles of the seasons show us that there is a season for everything, including emergence, growth, and renewal. That season is spring.

Spring is about waking from a restful sleep. After a long winter, nature intuitively wakes up and starts growing. The trees that were dormant spring to life with new buds. Perennial flowers burst from the defrosting soil. Animals and birds begin to build nests and fawns and bunnies show up in our yards. Like the plants and animals we observe waking up and getting busy with the activities of living, so too do we, as part of nature. Maybe spring is the best time for us to set new intentions, not January. As the days get longer and the weather warms up, the energy for renewal and growth offered by nature supports us in gathering the strength and motivation we need to put our intentions into action.

Nature also teaches us that this renewal cannot be rushed. The emergence of spring happens at its own pace, on its own terms. Some years we have an early thaw. Some years we have a late snowfall. Some years are wet, other years dry. No matter how many fits and starts to spring we have, eventually spring fully emerges and transitions into summer. Nature shows immense patience through this emergence and grows within the conditions present, whether rainy, dry, stormy, or sunny. Some springs, we have a late freeze, and the tender flower buds on the magnolia tree in my yard turn brown. Still, the tree leaves out, and flowers emerge the next spring. Nature shows us how to meet disappointment and death as parts of living.

Cultivating mindful awareness supports us in learning tools to work with the unpredictable emergence of spring in our lives. We learn how to watch what wants to emerge, rather than trying to force change that is not needed or skillful. We grow patience to let our lives unfold without trying to force it, sensing just the right amount of effort and making adjustments where needed. We grow the wisdom of when

to take action, and when to sit back, watch, re-evaluate our intentions, and even rest a bit longer. Mindful awareness helps us take in new information and adjust our actions with the changing weather patterns of life.

This spring, consider setting the intention to cultivate a mindfulness meditation practice. We can cultivate the wisdom of spring to support our own emergence and growth as the days get longer.

*Ann Brand, Ph.D. is a mindfulness teacher based in Eau Claire, WI. To find out more about classes and mentoring, visit [www.annbrandmindfulness.com](http://www.annbrandmindfulness.com).*



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MINDFULNESS

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# Why Your Gut Symptoms Keep Coming Back and Why the Real Problem Might Be Your Brain

by Heidi Toy, Functional Medicine

If you've dealt with chronic gas, bloating, constipation, diarrhea, or abdominal pain, you've probably walked the typical functional medicine path: see a practitioner, run a GIMAP or Gut Zoomer, and start an expensive protocol filled with antimicrobials, probiotics, binders, and gut healing supplements.

And what usually happens? You feel better... until the symptoms return.

Most people assume their practitioner didn't know how to help, but that's rarely the case. The issue is that many well-meaning clinicians are trained to look for root causes in the gut but not the mechanisms driving gut dysfunction. And the mechanism that is almost always overlooked is the brain-gut connection.

**The Missing Piece in Most Gut Workups** - A typical GI intake covers medications, infections, alcohol use, testing, and maybe a quick check for hypermobility. All these are important, but functional gastroenterologists, like Dr. Steven Sandberg-Lewis, emphasize that the true driver of chronic gut issues is often never mentioned: a past traumatic brain injury (TBI).

Here's the surprising part: You don't need to hit your head to injure your brain. Whiplash, falls, concussions, sports injuries, broken noses, broken tailbones, and blast exposure can all "shake" the brain enough to affect gut function—even decades later.

If nobody screens for these events, the real mechanism behind your gut issues goes undetected.

**How a Brain Issue Turns Into Gut Symptoms** - Your entire digestive system depends on brain and nerve communication. When the brain is inflamed or injured, several things happen:

- Gut motility slows or becomes irregular
- Blood flow to the gut decreases
- Digestion becomes impaired
- The gut lining weakens (leaky gut)
- Microbiome balance shifts
- Inflammation rises



Leaky gut allows bacteria and toxins to slip into the bloodstream. This triggers a systemic immune response that can travel back to the brain creating a vicious cycle where brain and gut inflammation continually worsen each other.

This is why your symptoms may improve temporarily with supplements yet return over and over again. You're treating the consequences, not the cause.

## **"I Practiced the Same Way... Until I Learned Better"**

For years, I also relied heavily on stool testing and gut protocols. Clients improved, but many relapsed. Eventually I realized what many advanced practitioners now understand: If you don't evaluate the brain-gut axis, you're doing an incomplete workup.

Once you include the brain, cases that seem "mysterious" suddenly make sense. And protocols finally stick.

## **"Has your brain ever been shaken?"**

This includes:

- Whiplash
- Falls
- Contact sports
- Broken tailbone
- Broken nose
- Blast exposure
- Any injury that jolted the body

These events can be the real driver of chronic digestive symptoms that won't resolve.

**The Bottom Line** - Gut symptoms are rarely just gut problems. If your issues keep returning despite all the testing, supplements, and protocols, you likely need a deeper evaluation—one that includes the brain.

When the brain-gut axis is disrupted, no stool test in the world can fix the problem.

# Kindness: A Journey to Cultivate the Heart's Strength

by Sandi Anderson CHTP, KT., RM., HT

I am here to walk with you on this spiritual life journey—not as someone ahead, but as a fellow traveler seeking to deepen the light within. Together let's pause to remember: We are all connected by the same life force. It's a sacred energy flowing through all beings and the universe itself. As such, we, and our world, can use more kindness.

Kindness is not merely a gesture—it is an inner strength, a muscle of the heart and mind that grows when we nourish it with mindful intention. Like a stream flowing gently yet persistently over stones, kindness shapes the world quietly but profoundly.

Ancient wisdom from many traditions teaches us that the energy we put forth returns to us. If we long for love, peace, or harmony, we must first embody these qualities ourselves. This is not a demand, but an invitation to align our actions with our deepest intentions. Kindness is an offering freely given, without expectation or conditions. It is the language beyond words, understood by all beings—whether human, animal, or spirit. As the wise have said, kindness touches the deaf and guides the blind. It is the universal language of compassion.

In the Buddhist path, the practice of loving-kindness or metta, calls us to extend a boundless embrace to all beings, including ourselves. It is a daily, ongoing commitment to soften our hearts amidst the challenges and fears that life presents.

Our world today is marked by profound challenges: isolation after global unrest, tensions with government agencies that divide, and the planet's own restless rhythms. Yet within these trials, we are invited to awaken our hearts even more fully. Just one small act of kindness—a smile, an encouraging word, a listening ear—can ripple outward, changing not only another's day but the fabric of our collective experience.

In this deeply interconnected existence, diversity is a gift. When we meet another's story with curiosity rather than judgment, we open the door to healing and understanding. Sometimes the greatest kindness of all is to really hear another's heart.

Pause now. Remember a recent moment when kindness reached you or you offered it to another. Feel the warmth that stirred within—a quiet joy, a softening in your chest. That feeling is food for your spirit. It's the strengthening of a kindness muscle that grows through use.



Science now confirms what the sages have always known: Kindness enriches us. It releases oxytocin that connects and soothes, lowers stress, and lights up the joy centers in our brains. When we choose to be kind, we care for ourselves as much as others.

So how do we cultivate this vital practice? By turning awareness into action, moment by moment. Some gentle ways to invite kindness into your day:

- Thank the unseen heroes—an essential worker
- Pay forward a simple kindness—cover the next coffee, hold a door
- Send a voice or text message to someone who may be feeling alone
- Send a handwritten note, a poem, or a smile through technology
- Practice speaking words that uplift and encourage those around you

Kindness, like breath or heartbeat, is a sacred rhythm. It requires no perfection, only presence.

As we continue this journey side by side, we'll nourish the muscle of kindness within our own hearts. Each act strengthens our connection to the divine spark within every being and weaves a tapestry of compassion that holds us all gently and lovingly.

Walk together with open hearts and be ready to meet both yourself and others with the kindness and tenderness that transforms. That energy will spread outward with each person: friend, family, county, country, globally, and our planet.

*Sandi Anderson R.M. Cht, Life & Spiritual Coach, /Midwife for the soul, integrative Reiki Healer. She lives in the Chippewa Valley, working with individuals across the country. She uses her intuitive gifts to encourage, empower others to know their true self, hear their soul, and heal.*

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# Chippewa Valley Bee Expo



The **Chippewa Valley Bee Expo** is an annual, educational event scheduled for **April 11–12, 2026, from 9:00am to 4:00pm** at the Northern Wisconsin State Fairgrounds in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin. It is designed to educate and inspire individuals about the vital role of pollinators, sustainable living, and natural beekeeping practices. The expo welcomes a broad audience, including experienced beekeepers, aspiring homesteaders, environmental advocates, and community members who are curious about supporting pollinators and adopting sustainable lifestyle practices.

The two-day event features **expert-led workshops and seminars** covering a range of topics such as Beekeeping 101, hive management and winterization, honey production and processing, pollinator-friendly gardening, biodiversity, and conservation. Throughout the day, visitors can attend live demonstrations, including honey tasting and cooking with honey.

A **Vendor Marketplace** offers beekeeping equipment and supplies, honey and honey-based products, gardening

and sustainable living items, and artisan goods, providing opportunities to connect directly with producers and experts. There are also **family-friendly activities**, including a “Kids Corner” with themed crafts and educational games.

Additional features of the expo include **raffles and giveaways**, chances to win beekeeping supplies and local goods, and opportunities for community networking among conservationists, educators, and hobbyists.

Admission is **\$15 for a single day or \$20 for both days**, with free entry for children 12 and under. Overall, the Chippewa Valley Bee Expo offers an engaging blend of education, community connection, and hands-on experiences centered on bees, pollinators, and sustainable practices.



## Schedule of Events & Speakers

### SATURDAY

- 9:00am Insulated Layen Hive .....**Bee Haven**
- 10:00am Food Plots .....**Creek Side**
- 11:00am **Wisconsin State Bee Inspector**
- 12:00pm Hive Hugger .....**Peggy Desanto**
- 1:00pm Building Strength in Your Hive .....**Dadant**
- 2:00pm Seed Saving Present, The Lost Art of Seed Saving: Preserving Flavor, Freedom, & Farms
- 3:00pm Pollinator Friendly Yard .....**Flowering Lawn**

**Bucket Raffle Inside Building After**

Bucket Raffle - One Each Day, Draw Time 3:30  
Need Not Be Present to Win. Tickets Available at Both Buildings at the Door.  
**\$2 Each | 6 For \$10 | 15 For \$20**

### SUNDAY

- 9:00am **USDA**
- 10:00am Mites And More .....**Bee Squad**
- 11:00am Insulated Layen Hive .....**Bee Haven**
- 12:00pm Hive Hugger Peggy .....**Desanto**
- 1:00pm Starting Your Garden ..... **Elizabeth**
- 2:00pm Building Strength in Your Hive .....**Dadant**
- 3:00pm Pruning Your Fruit Trees ..... **Avenue Orchard**

**Raffle Inside After**

### COOKING With Honey

#### SATURDAY

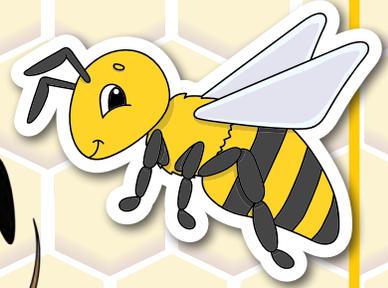
- 9:00am Let's Join the Queen
- 9:30am Day Spring Farm
- 10:30am Butcher Block ..... Sausage Making
- 11:30am WI Honey Queen ..... Honey Fudge
- 12:30pm Jessica ..... Tinctures and Your Gut
- 1:30pm Darla's Breakfast Waffles
- 2:30pm Butcher Block Taste What We Made
- 3:30pm Mead Making

#### SUNDAY

- 9:00am Orchid Apothecary ..... Natural Medicine, Past Present and Future
- 10:00am Salty Acres ..... Tallow History And Uses
- 11:00am Nector of the Gods ..... Mead Making
- 12:00pm Paula Dee ..... Master Tonic Benefits
- 1:00pm Bread Making with Aundre
- 2:00pm Darla Zimmerman .... Tumerac/Honey Gummies
- 3:00pm Jessica Janssen ..... Eating Healthy



# Come visit these vendors at the Expo!



## Mar Mar BaRKery Pet Treats

Mar Mar's BaRKery is a home-based business in Chippewa Falls. We focus on made-from-scratch pet treats with NATURAL ingredients. NO added sugars, salt, preservatives, colors, or flavors. We buy local. Find me at 2026 Bee Expo or call Diane 715-382-6312. After all, if you won't eat it, why should your pet!



## Visit The Chippewa Valley Farmers Markets May through October!

Saturday: Festival Foods West Ridge • 8 am - 2 pm  
 Saturday: Festival Chippewa Falls • 8 am - 2 pm  
 Sunday: Festival Foods Birch Street • 8 am - 2 pm  
 Monday: Festival Foods Mall Drive • 11 am - 5 pm  
 Tuesday: Festival Foods Birch Street • 11 am - 5 pm  
 Wednesday: Festival Foods West Ridge • 11 am - 5 pm  
 Thursday: Festival Chippewa Falls • 10 am - 5 pm

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 Lupinus polyphyllus

**ROSE**  
 Rosa

**CALIFORNIA LILAC**  
 Ceanothus "Victoria"

**HIGH SUMMER**

**LAVENDER**  
 Lavandula angustifolia

**GOLDENROD**  
 Solidago Canadensis

**FENNEL**  
 Foeniculum Vulgare

**LATE SUMMER**

**SUNFLOWER**  
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 Verbena bonariensis

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**56%** OF HONEYBEE COLONIES IN THE UNITED STATES DIED FROM APRIL 2024 - APRIL 2025\*

\*Source: Facebook - Science Pulse

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## SEASONAL DRINK RECIPE

### HIGH TIDE COLADA

#### Ingredients:

- 1.5 oz Drinkin Buds Coconut Spirit
- 1.5 oz Coconut cream or puree
- 1.5 oz Pineapple juice
- 0.5 oz Lime juice

#### Instructions:

Shake all ingredients with ice for 10 seconds. Strain into a glass filled with fresh ice and garnish with an Amarena cherry. No blender is required.



**Tropical Mixer:**  
Combine 1.5 oz of the Drinkin' Buds spirit with pineapple juice, orange juice, or coconut water for a quick, low-calorie drink.



# RIVERFLOW REFILLERY'S LOCAL MISSION AND LOCAL IMPACT

The United States generates more plastic waste than any other country, producing an estimated 42 million metric tons each year (1). On a per-capita basis, Americans discard far more plastic than residents of most nations, intensifying long-standing challenges related to waste management, landfill capacity, and environmental contamination. Only a small percentage of plastic is ever recycled; the majority is buried in landfills or escapes into the natural environment (1). Globally, roughly 33 billion pounds of plastic enter marine ecosystems annually (2), where it persists for decades, harming wildlife, degrading water quality, and disrupting fragile ecosystems.

Against this backdrop, Riverflow Refillery stands out as a practical, community-based solution in downtown Eau Claire. Riverflow is a low-waste, eco-friendly retail store that offers refillable household cleaning products, laundry detergents, and personal care items, allowing customers to reuse containers rather than purchase single-use plastic packaging. The store also carries sustainable alternatives such as bamboo utensils and reusable cloth bags, further supporting customers who want to reduce waste in everyday life.

Given current regional solid waste projections, Riverflow plays a vital role in addressing Eau Claire County's waste management challenges. With the primary disposal site, Seven Mile Creek Landfill, eventually facing capacity, finding long-term, sustainable solutions is critical. Riverflow contributes to regional sustainability goals by empowering residents to minimize waste generation, thereby reducing pressure on infrastructure and delaying the need for future landfill expansion.

All products sold at Riverflow are sourced from small businesses that meet strict standards for all-natural ingredients, ethical production practices, and plastic-free packaging. The store operates using a closed-loop system: bulk containers are returned to manufacturers for reuse, which eliminates single-use packaging entirely, allowing materials to circulate longer within the supply chain. This approach aligns with circular economy principles that prioritize reuse over disposal.

Research shows that refill and reuse systems can reduce plastic use by 60 to 80 percent compared to single-use packaging (3), while also lowering greenhouse gas emissions associated with manufacturing and transportation. At a global scale, reuse models are considered one of the most effective upstream strategies for reducing plastic waste, accounting for approximately one-third of potential reductions under systemic change scenarios (4).

Riverflow Refillery has been recognized locally with a Sustainable Eau Claire award for its leadership in waste reduction and community engagement. The owner is also active with Plastic Free EC, helping promote broader behavioral change throughout the region. Together, these efforts demonstrate how mission-driven small businesses can play a meaningful role in reducing plastic pollution on land, in freshwater systems, and ultimately in the world's oceans.

1. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/us-plastic-pollution>
2. <https://usa.oceana.org/our-campaigns/plastic/>
3. [https://plasticspolicy.port.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Making-reuse-a-reality-report\\_GPPC.pdf](https://plasticspolicy.port.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Making-reuse-a-reality-report_GPPC.pdf)
4. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969721049676#bb0075>



# Importance of Grooming Your Dog

By Ruff Life Pet Hotel

**A**ll 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.

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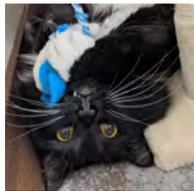
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