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SURGERY HOURS AND SERVICES

CONSULTATIONS can be arranged by
phoning. 5655 1355

Monday to Friday 9.00am–5.30pm

Saturday 9.00am–12.00noon
(phone lines open at 8.30am)

The practice prefers to see patients by
appointment in order to minimise people's
waiting time.

Home visits can be arranged when necessary.
If you need a home visit, please contact the
surgery as soon as possible after 8.30am.

For After hours emergency medical attention
– at night, weekends or public holidays please
call 03 56542753 where a nurse will triage
your needs and contact the doctor on call.

YOUR DOCTOR

MAY 2026



**THYROID
MATTERS**



**MANAGING
MUSCLE CRAMPS**



**POSTURE TIPS
FOR KIDS**



**HEALTH IN A
NUTSHELL**

Compliments of your GP

Why fat cell function matters for your health

When we think about body fat, we often focus on how much we have. But our fat cells (adipocytes) are not just passive storage units – they actively help support weight control, energy levels, and metabolic health.

What fat tissue actually does

In simple terms, fat cells are constantly storing and releasing energy when your body needs fuel. The fat inside these cells is continually replaced, and the cells themselves slowly renew over time.

This flexible, ongoing process helps support stable blood sugar levels and healthy blood fats. Problems can arise when fat cells become less efficient.

What affects fat cell efficiency?

If your body regularly takes in more kilojoules (energy) than it uses, the excess is stored in fat cells, which mainly grow larger to accommodate it.

If this energy surplus continues over time, fat cells can reach their storage limit and new ones may form. This process is slower and less common than cell enlargement. Larger fat cells are generally less responsive to signals that trigger fat release.

When cell storage capacity is exceeded, fat can also build up in other tissues such as the liver and muscles, which may affect how these organs function. This pattern is associated with conditions such as type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Think of this like drawers: when they're overfilled, items can spill out and become harder to manage. When they contain only what you need, they're easier to use.

When body weight is stable, fat cell size and activity still change depending on energy balance; however, their numbers remain fairly constant.

How fat develops in childhood

Fat cell growth is most active during childhood and adolescence. This is a normal process that helps support growth and development during this stage of life.

During this time, both the number and size of fat cells can increase more readily than in adulthood. How these cells develop early in life may influence metabolism later on.

Weight and everyday health

The goal isn't to "get rid of" fat cells as they're essential for normal health, but to help them function well. When weight is lost, fat cells shrink rather than disappear. Smaller fat cells generally function more effectively than larger ones.

Rapid weight loss can shrink fat cells quickly, but it's often gained back once strict dieting stops. Keeping your weight within a healthy range over time is better for your health.

In practical terms, this is about small lifestyle choices that you can keep doing easily each day:

- Move regularly every day, rather than relying on one period of exercise.
- Choose balanced meals that keep energy levels steady.
- Limit long periods of sitting or inactivity.
- Gradually reduce habits that may work against your health, such as having excess alcohol and added sugar.

Over time, regularly practising these behaviours supports long-term weight management and overall health.

Health isn't just about body fat. It's about how well fat cells function, and the everyday habits that help keep them working well.

Muscle cramps: why your muscles sometimes ‘rebel’

Ever been enjoying a stretch when suddenly – ouch! – a muscle seizes up in a painful cramp? You’re not alone. Muscle cramps are common, and can happen when you least expect them. Read on to find out why they occur and what can help you to stay active and manage symptoms.

Any muscle can cramp, but they most often affect the calves, thighs, hands, feet, or back. Cramps can happen during exercise, at rest, or even while you sleep.

What happens in a cramp?

A muscle cramp is a sudden, involuntary contraction of one or more muscles. During a cramp, the muscle stays tightly contracted, which can make it feel hard, tense, and painful. It’s often uncomfortable to move the affected muscle until it releases.

What causes cramps?

There is no single proven cause, but muscle fatigue and changes in how nerves signal to the muscle are thought to play a key role. This can happen from overworking muscles during exercise or from repetitive activity. Other factors that may contribute include:

Dehydration:

Not getting enough fluids, especially when exercising.

Nutrient imbalance:

Low levels of key minerals such as potassium, calcium, or magnesium.

Muscles and posture issues:

Poor posture or muscle imbalances can place extra strain on certain muscles.

Tips to keep cramps at bay

Hydrate!

Water is your muscles’ best friend, especially during exercise.

Stretch:

Gentle stretching before and after activity can keep muscles flexible.

Eat helpful foods:

Bananas, kidney beans, leafy greens, dairy, nuts and seeds, oats, and salmon provide nutrients that help support normal muscle function.

Keep moving:

Long periods of immobility may make cramps more likely.

Massage:

Gently massaging a cramped muscle can help it relax.

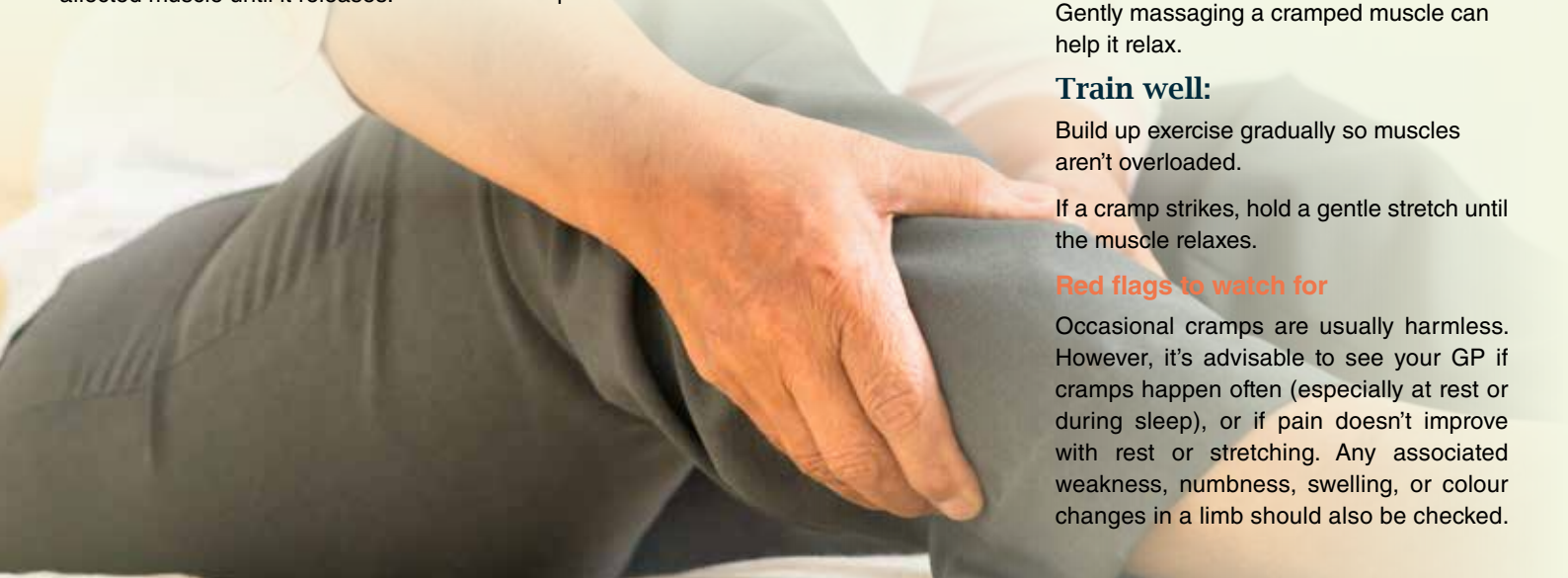
Train well:

Build up exercise gradually so muscles aren’t overloaded.

If a cramp strikes, hold a gentle stretch until the muscle relaxes.

Red flags to watch for

Occasional cramps are usually harmless. However, it’s advisable to see your GP if cramps happen often (especially at rest or during sleep), or if pain doesn’t improve with rest or stretching. Any associated weakness, numbness, swelling, or colour changes in a limb should also be checked.

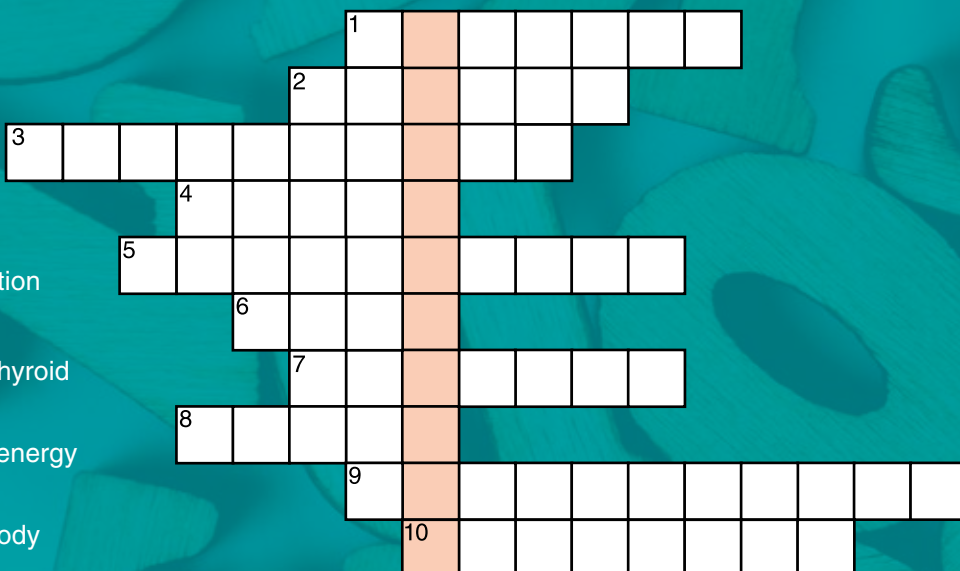


HIDDEN IN THE CELLS: CAN YOU FIND THE SECRET WORD?

Fill the answers of the clues in the puzzle. If you have done this, you will find the word in the bold rectangles. Good Luck!

CLUES:

1. Feeling very tired
2. A key nutrient needed for normal thyroid hormone production
3. How the body uses food to make energy
4. A sudden, involuntary muscle contraction
5. A unit of energy used in food
6. A mineral that supports immune and thyroid function
7. A small gland in the neck that affects energy and growth
8. Organ that pumps blood around the body
9. Low body fluid levels in the body
10. A trace mineral found in soil and food



ANSWERS ON THE BACK PAGE

Straight talk about kids' posture: simple tips for healthy spines

Children's spines develop along with the rest of their body, and may be sensitive to repeated stress. Today's habits – constant screen use and long periods of sitting – can challenge growing spines.

It's not about having "perfect" posture – even little changes throughout the day can make a big difference over time.

Avoiding the screen slump

Screens are part of life, but how they're used matters. "Tech neck" (forward-head posture) and slouching increase muscle fatigue and place strain on the spine, neck, and upper back. Over time, this can lead to stiffness, headaches, and discomfort.

Position screens at eye level to avoid tipping the head forward. Use a desk and chair that allow feet to rest flat on the floor, and elbows, knees, and hips at around 90 degrees.

Encourage regular breaks from screens and sitting – even short movement breaks can help to reset posture.

Reducing backpack burden

School bags can be surprisingly heavy. Students should carry less than 10% of their own body weight. Heavy or uneven loads can strain the spine, shoulders, and hips, increasing fatigue and discomfort.

Choose a backpack with wide, padded straps and wear both straps – not just over one shoulder. A waist strap can also help take weight off the shoulders. Balance and pack heavier items closest to the spine.

Sleep position matters

Children and teenagers spend many hours sleeping, and good sleep posture can help reduce unnecessary strain on the spine.

Back or side sleeping generally supports healthy spine alignment, especially with a supportive pillow. Front sleeping can place extra strain on the neck and spine.

Use a firm, comfortable mattress and a supportive pillow to help maintain the neck's natural curve.

Movement: the main ingredient

Regular movement is vital for strong muscles, bones, and joints, but long hours of sitting can lead to stiffness and weaker muscles that support posture.

Growing bodies need a variety of activities to develop strength, coordination, flexibility, and healthy movement patterns. Sports, dancing, playground time, and outdoor games are all great options.

If your child has ongoing back or neck discomfort, seek professional guidance early to support both their posture and overall wellbeing.

Brazil nuts: selenium and other nutrients

Brazil nuts are small, but they're packed with nutrients. Just one nut can provide more than your daily selenium needs, although this can vary.

Why selenium matters

Selenium is a trace mineral found in soil, which means the amount in food depends on where it's grown. Although deficiency is rare, some people in regions where soil levels are low may have lower intake.

Selenium helps your thyroid produce and activate hormones that regulate metabolism and energy use. Without enough of this mineral, it may be harder for your thyroid to maintain hormone balance, which can affect its normal function.

Selenium is also found in grains, eggs, seeds, beef and fish, although Brazil nuts are a richer source for their size. Just one or two nuts can provide enough selenium for most people.

The key is moderation – too much selenium, particularly from supplements, can lead to toxicity, which may cause symptoms such as fatigue, stomach upset, nail changes, hair loss, and nerve problems in the hands and feet.

Selenium isn't the only benefit

While Brazil nuts are known for selenium, they also contain nutrients which support overall wellbeing, including immune function and heart health.

- **Healthy fats** – mostly polyunsaturated, good for heart health
- **Magnesium** – helps muscles and nerves work properly
- **Copper** – supports energy and the nervous and immune systems
- **Zinc** – supports immune function and thyroid hormone production
- **Vitamin E** – a powerful antioxidant, protecting against cell damage

Food first, not supplements

Keep in mind that our bodies rely on many nutrients which work together. Supplements are not always necessary and may lead to imbalances of other nutrients, or interact with some medications. It's best to aim for a balanced, nutritious diet.

If you have existing thyroid issues, or are taking supplements or medication, ask your doctor for dietary advice.



EGGY BREAD WITH BANANA, BERRIES & NUTS

Golden egg bread with crisp edges and a soft, fluffy centre... this simple, comforting breakfast or brunch is filling and full of natural energy – perfect for a balanced start to the day.

INGREDIENTS (1 SERVING)

- 2 thick slices soft wholegrain bread
- 1 egg
- 1 ripe banana, sliced
- ¼ cup mixed berries (fresh or thawed)
- 1–2 Tbsp. chopped nuts (e.g. walnuts or cashews)
- 1–2 Tbsp. milk
- Cinnamon (optional)
- 1 tsp honey or maple syrup (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a bowl, whisk the egg with a splash of milk and a pinch of cinnamon (if using).
2. Dip each slice of bread into the egg mixture, coating both sides well.
3. Heat a non-stick pan over medium heat and cook the bread for 2–3 minutes on each side until golden and set.
4. Top the warm egg bread with sliced banana, berries, and chopped nuts.
5. Drizzle with a little honey or maple syrup if you like a touch of sweetness.



Add Greek yogurt on the side for extra protein and creaminess.

Swap nuts depending on what you have on hand.

Your thyroid: small but powerful

Have you ever wondered why you sometimes feel tired, cold, or moody for no obvious reason? Your thyroid might be involved.

How the thyroid works

This small, butterfly-shaped gland is located in your neck. Despite its size, it has a big job: it produces hormones that help regulate your heart rate, body temperature, weight, mood, digestion, and even how your organs function.

In short, it's a bit like a thermostat and engine control all in one – helping to keep your body running smoothly.

What can go wrong?

Sometimes the thyroid doesn't work as it should. An underactive thyroid produces too little hormone, a condition called hypothyroidism. Symptoms include sensitivity to cold, fatigue, weight gain, low mood, or goitre (an enlarged thyroid gland).

On the other hand, if it becomes overactive and makes too much hormone, it can cause hyperthyroidism. This may lead to symptoms such as increased appetite, weight loss, rapid pulse, anxiety or nervousness, heat intolerance, and diarrhoea.

Thyroid problems can happen for many reasons. Autoimmune conditions, where the body's immune system attacks the thyroid, are a common cause and can sometimes run in families. Other causes can include iodine deficiency, certain medications, or inflammation of the thyroid.

Can diet affect the thyroid?

Diet plays an important role in thyroid health. Key nutrients such as iodine, selenium,

iron, and zinc support normal thyroid hormone production. Both low or excessive intake of these nutrients can affect thyroid function, although deficiencies are relatively uncommon in Australia.

A varied, balanced diet is the best way to support healthy thyroid function and overall wellbeing.

In contrast, some highly restrictive diets or poor overall diet quality – such as a high intake of ultra-processed foods, alcohol, or sugar – may affect thyroid health indirectly.

Lifestyle tips for a healthy thyroid

While some thyroid conditions may need medication, there are simple lifestyle choices that can support your thyroid:

- **Eat balanced meals:** Include foods like dairy, eggs, fish, nuts and seeds, and a variety of fruit and vegetables. See our article on Brazil nuts and selenium to find out more about thyroid health and diet.
- **Stay active:** Regular exercise helps support your metabolism and energy levels.
- **Check-ups:** Regular visits to your GP – especially if you notice changes in energy, weight, or mood – can help catch problems early.

If you have concerns about your diet or thyroid function, it's a good idea to speak with your doctor.



INFLUENZA IN 2026

Influenza is a common viral infection that affects people of all ages.

While it may be a mild disease for some, it can also cause serious illness and even lead to hospitalisation in otherwise healthy people.

Vaccination, administered annually by a health professional is the safest means of protection from influenza.

Each year the virus' circulating can vary, this is why annual vaccination is very important. There are different vaccine brands available for different age groups, all brands are quadrivalent, which means they contain 4 viral strains. Influenza vaccines have been around for many decades and are very safe. The vaccine does not contain any live viruses and therefore cannot give you influenza. Common side effects are mild pain, redness and swelling at the injection site, more serious reactions are very rare.

Flu vaccination is strongly recommended and free under the National Immunisation Program for the following people:

- Children aged 6 months to less than 5 years
- Pregnant women at any stage during pregnancy
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 6 months and over
- People aged 65 years and over
- People aged 6 months and over with certain medical conditions.

If you are not eligible for the free vaccine you can purchase the vaccine from participating pharmacies or speak to your GP.

What else can you do to stay healthy during Flu season?

- Hand Hygiene - washing your hands regularly with soap and water or using handrub is the most important routine to include in your day.
- Cover your mouth - If you feel a sneeze or cough coming on and you don't have a tissue handy, it is important to cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Wear a mask
- Stay home – Staying at home while you are unwell is the best way to avoid spreading the flu or covid.
- Eat lots of Fruit and vegetables
- Stay active – 30 minutes a day of activity

Government funded flu vaccine will be available from late April, 2026.

Questions to ask at your doctor's visit

Asking questions helps you get the care you need. To make the most of your visit, jot down anything you'd like to know about in the space below. Take this list with you so it's easy to remember what you wanted to ask.

DOCTOR'S NAME	DATE	TIME
1.		
2.		
3.		
NOTES:		

Hidden Word Puzzle answers:

1. Fatigue
2. Iodine
3. Metabolism
4. Cramp
5. Kilojoules
6. Zinc
7. Thyroid
8. Heart
9. Dehydration
10. Selenium

Hidden word: Adipocytes

Disclaimer: The information in this newsletter is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Decisions relating to your health should always be made in consultation with your health care provider. Talk to your doctor first.