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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

FEBRUARY 2026



**SHOULD YOU
QUIT COFFEE?**



**YOUR BODY'S
QUIET WARNINGS**



**HEART-RELATED
SYMPTOMS**



**VITAMIN B12
BASICS**

Compliments of your GP

How to have a healthy start to the school year

The new school term seems to come around quickly after the holidays. For parents and carers, it's time to think about a few practical things that can help children get off to a great start.

Health checks

Regular health checks are optional but can help pick up concerns early and support your child's wellbeing. They might include recommended immunisations, vision and hearing checks when advised, dental reviews, and talking with your GP if you have any concerns about growth, development, or general health.

Spread of infection

Children often don't have much sense of personal space, so infections can spread quickly in schools. Simple hygiene habits — regular handwashing, not sharing utensils, and covering coughs and sneezes — can help reduce spread.

Head lice can crawl quickly from one head of hair to another. Look out for itchy, red scalps, little insects, and tiny eggs clinging to hairs. Products designed to treat an infestation are effective when used as directed. Remember to check everyone in contact regularly during an outbreak.

Threadworm is a common intestinal worm in young children. It isn't usually serious, but can cause a very itchy bottom, particularly at night. Threadworm is easily treated with medication, and it's also important to treat the whole family. Good hygiene habits, keeping fingernails short, and washing all bedding can help prevent it from recurring.

Hand, foot and mouth disease is a contagious viral illness that causes cold-like symptoms and a rash that blisters, mainly on the hands, feet, and inside the mouth. It can be uncomfortable but usually clears up quickly. Keep your child home from school until the blisters have dried to help prevent further spread.

Bacterial and viral infections are hard to avoid in school settings. Most children recover well with rest, fluids, and standard home care. Supporting your child's general health also helps their immune system function well.

Some illnesses that used to be common in childhood — such as measles, mumps, and chickenpox — are now less frequent due to effective vaccination programmes.

Healthy eating

A balanced diet is important for overall wellbeing and helps children stay focused, energised, and ready to learn.

- Protein and iron: lean meats, boiled eggs, tuna, baked beans, chickpeas, and lentils.
- Protein and calcium: yoghurt, cheese, milk, or calcium-fortified plant milks, tofu, tahini, almonds, and chia seeds.
- Fibre and vitamins: wholegrain bread, wraps, crackers, pasta, rice, or couscous, plus a variety of fruit and vegetables such as berries, apples, oranges, carrots, capsicum, broccoli, cucumbers, and tomatoes.
- Healthy fats: oily fish, avocado, olive oil, nuts, and seeds.
- Hydration: encourage plenty of water as the main drink throughout the day.

Keeping children healthy isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. A consistent sleep routine, good diet, and plenty of time to play, all support their physical and emotional wellbeing. If you have concerns about your child's health, consult your GP.



Our newsletter is free - please take a copy with you

Your body's subtle signals — what they're trying to tell you

Our bodies are very good at getting our attention when something's wrong — but not always in obvious ways. Often, the early signs are easy to brush off as “just getting older,” “being busy,” or “having a bad week.” Although there can be many different signs, here are some of the more common ones and what they might mean.

Persistent tiredness

Feeling tired now and then is normal, but if fatigue is unexplained, ongoing, and doesn't improve with rest, it may be a sign your body needs support. Possible causes include:

- Poor or disrupted sleep
- Nutritional deficiencies
- Underlying medical conditions

Frequent headaches

Occasional headaches are common, but regular headaches can signal an underlying issue. Common triggers include:

- Dehydration
- Eye strain (especially from screens)
- Poor posture, neck tension, or teeth clenching
- Sinus congestion

A headache diary can help your GP identify patterns and possible causes.

Changes in digestion

Persistent bloating, constipation, diarrhoea, or frequent indigestion may be linked to:

- Diet changes or food intolerances
- Gut conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome
- Side effects of medications

Any ongoing changes in bowel habits should be checked, especially if accompanied by pain, weight loss, or blood.

Shortness of breath

Getting puffed more easily than usual is not always about fitness, possible contributors include:

- Low iron levels
- Lung or heart conditions
- Asthma
- Reduced fitness after illness or inactivity

Joint or muscle pain

Occasional aches are part of life, but pain that keeps returning or limits movement is your body asking for attention. It may be caused by:

- Muscle tension or poor posture
- Age-related joint changes
- Inflammatory conditions
- Reduced activity levels

Unusual mood changes

Irritability, anxiety, sadness, or losing interest in things you usually enjoy can be linked to:

- Sleep problems
- Hormonal changes
- Nutritional deficiencies

- Mental health conditions such as depression

Stress and anxiety

Irritability, fatigue, poor sleep, digestive changes, muscle tension, and even shortness of breath can all be signs of ongoing stress or anxiety. Noticing these early signs can help you manage stress before it affects your overall health.

When to talk with your GP

These signs aren't always serious, but if they last for more than a few weeks, get worse, or feel unusual for you, it's a good idea to check in with your GP. An early assessment can help identify the cause, address any concerns sooner, and put your mind at ease.

For a closer look at subtle signs that may relate to heart health, see our companion article, *Whispers from the heart*

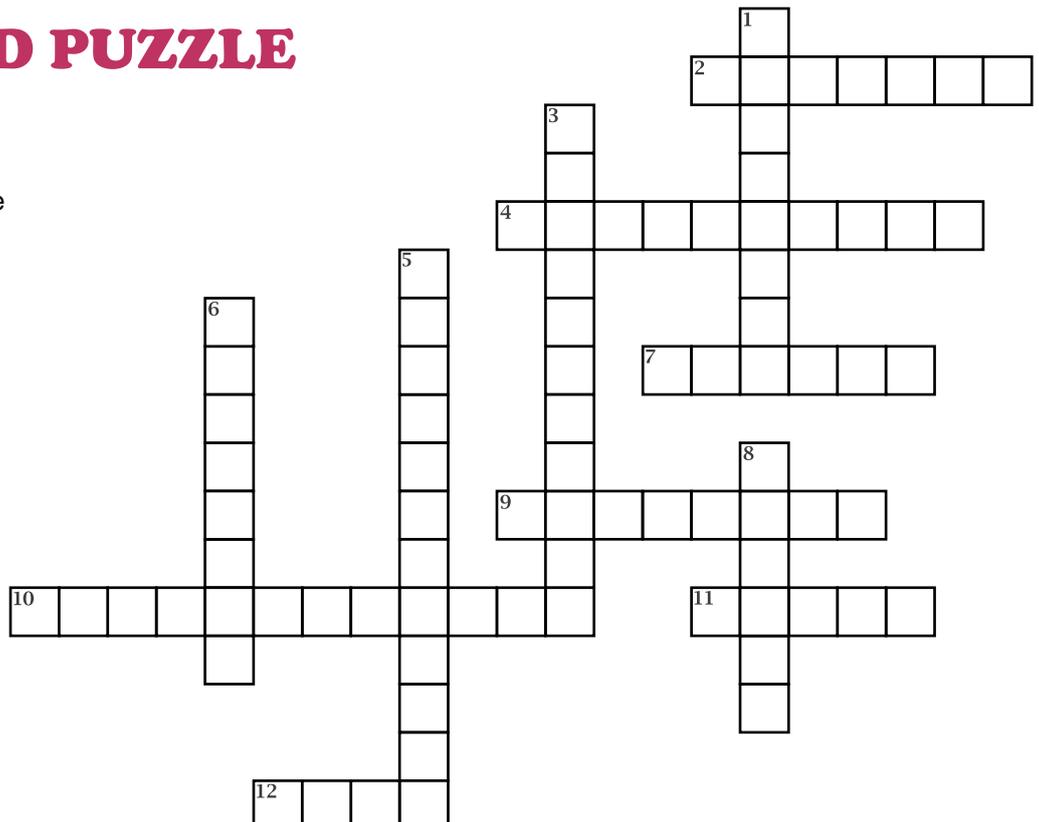
CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS:

- 2: Feeling very tired
 4: Common intestinal parasite
 7: Power and vitality
 9: Condition affecting blood sugar
 10: Protection against disease
 11: Organ that pumps blood
 12: Tiny insects called head lice

DOWN:

- 1: A condition causing yellowing of the skin or eyes
 3: Low body fluid levels
 5: Fluttering, racing, or irregular heartbeat
 6: Stimulant in coffee and tea
 8: Feeling tense or pressured





Whispers from the heart: A closer look at early heart-related symptoms

Heart problems don't always begin with sudden chest pain or a medical emergency. For many people, the earliest signs are subtle and easy to overlook — especially when they develop slowly. These quieter changes are often explained away as ageing, stress, or changes in fitness, but they can sometimes be the body's early way of asking for attention.

Reduced energy may mean that everyday tasks feel more tiring than they used to, or you need to rest more often. While this can be related to sleep, stress, or lower fitness levels, it can also occur when your heart isn't pumping as efficiently as it once did.

Breathlessness, particularly when walking up hills or climbing stairs, is another symptom people often dismiss as lack of fitness. Becoming slightly puffed during exertion can be normal, but breathlessness that is new, worsening, or out of proportion to your activity level should be checked. In some cases, it may suggest that your heart is working harder to deliver oxygen around your body.

Swelling in your lower legs, ankles, or feet can be an early clue. It's caused by

fluid build-up and is often more noticeable at the end of the day. Some mild swelling can occur after long periods of sitting or standing, but swelling that persists or increases may signal that your heart isn't moving blood and fluid around your body as efficiently as it should.

Palpitations, such as fluttering, racing, or an irregular heartbeat, are often harmless. However, frequent or prolonged episodes, especially if they occur along with dizziness, breathlessness, or fatigue, should be discussed with your GP.

Book an appointment with your GP if your symptoms are new, getting worse, interfering with daily life, or feel unusual for you. Paying attention to these early signals early can make a difference to long-term heart health.



Vitamin B12: What happens when levels are low

Vitamin B12 is essential for nerve health, memory, and the production of red blood cells. Most people in Australia get enough from their diet, but levels can fall gradually without obvious warning signs — especially as we age, or if our diet contains very little animal-based food.

B12 deficiency: who's most at risk?

Diet, age, and certain medications can all affect B12 levels.

B12 is found mainly in meat, eggs, and dairy foods. This means if you follow a vegetarian or vegan diet you may need fortified foods or supplements to meet your needs.

As you get older, your body may absorb B12 less efficiently. Long-term use of some medications — for example, certain diabetes treatments or drugs that reduce stomach acid — can also lower B12 levels.

Signs to watch for

Low B12 can be subtle at first. You might feel unusually tired, notice tingling or numbness in your hands or feet, or struggle with memory. If deficiency continues, more serious symptoms may appear, such as persistent numbness or tingling, muscle weakness, pale or jaundiced skin, mood or cognitive problems, and difficulty with walking or balance.

These symptoms can have many other causes, so a simple blood test is the best way to know for sure.

Can B12 deficiency be treated?

Most people can correct mild B12 deficiency through supplements or dietary adjustments. More significant deficiency or difficulty absorbing B12 may require closer monitoring and guidance from a GP. Regular checks help ensure levels are restored safely and symptoms are monitored.

When to see your GP

If you notice ongoing fatigue, tingling, or other subtle changes — or have risk factors such as older age, restrictive diets, or long-term medication — speak with your GP. Early detection and treatment can help reduce the risk of complications and support your overall wellbeing.



Healthy school lunch ideas

Each option combines protein, fibre, and healthy fats to support steady energy. They're easy to prepare and eat, and should be kept chilled in a lunch box with an ice pack.

- **Wholegrain sandwich or wrap** with lean chicken, tuna, egg, hummus, plus salad vegetables
- **Mini lentil or chickpea patties** with vegetable sticks and a yoghurt-based dip
- **Boiled egg**, wholegrain crackers, cheese slices, and cherry tomatoes
- **Pasta or couscous salad** with beans or tuna, olive oil dressing, and mixed vegetables
- **Yoghurt (or calcium-fortified plant yoghurt)** topped with fruit and muesli
- **Avocado and cheese sandwich** on wholegrain bread with carrot or cucumber sticks
- **Power Balls** — blend cooked chickpeas with a little honey or mashed banana, rolled oats, chopped dried fruit (like apricots or raisins), and seeds (chia, pumpkin, or sunflower). Roll into small balls.

Where school allergy policies allow:

- **Apple, carrot, or celery sticks** with a nut butter dip
 - **Dried fruit, nuts, and seed mix**
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Coffee and your health: finding the right balance

Many of us start the year wondering whether our daily coffee or tea is helping or hindering our health. The truth is that caffeine has both potential benefits and drawbacks, depending on your body and overall consumption.

Possible perks of your morning brew

Sharper focus and alertness

Caffeine is a natural stimulant that blocks a brain chemical that makes us feel sleepy, so it may help you feel more awake and focused. Some research suggests that regular caffeine intake may slightly improve alertness and mood.

Potential long-term health associations

Observational studies have found links between moderate coffee consumption and a lower risk of certain long-term conditions, such as type 2 diabetes, Parkinson's disease, and some cancers. These potential effects are thought to come from antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds found in coffee beans and tea leaves.

Heart health

Although caffeine can temporarily raise heart rate, moderate intake has been linked in some studies with a slightly lower risk of stroke or heart failure.

When caffeine is less helpful

Jitters, anxiety, and sleep disruption

Caffeine can affect people differently. Nervousness, restlessness, or difficulty sleeping can signal that you've had more than your body can comfortably tolerate. Caffeine can stay in your system for many hours, so drinking it later in the day can affect your sleep and energy the next morning.

Digestive changes and withdrawal

Caffeine may irritate the stomach or worsen acid reflux in some people. It also has a mild laxative effect. Regular caffeine drinkers who skip their usual dose may experience headaches, irritability, or tiredness.

Hidden extras

Many café drinks contain added sugar, syrups, or cream. These can quickly increase your daily kilojoule intake and may contribute to weight gain over time.

Finding your balance

Most healthy adults can safely consume around three to four cups of black coffee or caffeinated tea per day, (although this does depend on its strength). Children and adolescents should avoid caffeine, as it can affect sleep, behaviour, and development.

People with high blood pressure, heart conditions, or other health concerns should discuss caffeine intake with their GP. During pregnancy, caffeine should be limited — ideally no more than 200 mg per day — or avoided to reduce potential risks to the baby.

Tolerance varies between individuals, so pay attention to how your body responds, limit added sugar, and try to have your last cup before midday. If you are unsure how much caffeine is right for you, speak with your GP.



ABOUT LUNG CANCER SCREENING

Eligible Australians aged 50 to 70 can screen for signs of lung cancer every two years through the new National Lung Cancer Screening Program (NLCSP).

The NLCSP uses low-dose computed tomography (CT) scans to look for lung cancer in eligible people without any symptoms who are at a higher risk of lung cancer due to their age and smoking history.

Eligibility checks and referrals for low-dose CT scans will be overseen by your doctor, your smoking history and age.

The National Cancer Screening Register (NCSR) will support delivery of the NLCSP by maintaining a national database of lung cancer screening records. The NCSR will also generate screening reminders and notify people and healthcare providers of their results following a low-dose CT scan.

Two new Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) items have been created to provide free low-dose CT scans under the NLCSP. These will be mandatory bulk billing items and will have mandatory reporting requirements.

Program eligibility

Eligible people invited to participate in the NLCSP must:

- be aged 50 to 70, and
- have no signs or symptoms suggestive of lung cancer (e.g. persistent cough, coughing up blood, shortness of breath), and
- smoke cigarettes or have quit within the last 10 years, and
- have a smoking history of at least 30 pack years (e.g. a pack a day for 30 years or 2 packs a day for 15 years).

When determining program eligibility, you will need to work with your doctor to estimate the average number of cigarettes smoked per day and over how many years. For example: if you smoked 20 cigarettes per day (one pack) for 30 years, this is the equivalent of 30 pack years.

You do not have to quit smoking to participate in the NLCSP.

More information

For more information for healthcare providers about the NLCSP, please visit the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing's dedicated website.

This website also houses a toolkit for healthcare providers with information, education and resources to support you to prepare for the NLCSP.

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:

Crossword Answers:

- | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 1. Jaundice | 5. Palpitations | 9. Diabetes |
| 2. Fatigue | 6. Caffeine | 10. Immunisation |
| 3. Dehydration | 7. Energy | 11. Heart |
| 4. Threadworm | 8. Stress | 12. Nits |

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.