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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

SEPTEMBER 2024



**SPINAL
SHOWDOWN**



**SPINAL
SUPPORT**



**SELENIUM
POWER**



TONSILLITIS

Compliments of your GP

What you need to know about fatty liver disease

Fatty liver disease affects around one in three Australian adults and is becoming more common in Western countries due to inactive lifestyles and poor diets.

The liver, your body's largest internal organ, plays essential roles in overall health by processing and storing nutrients, metabolising carbohydrates and fats, detoxifying harmful substances, synthesising proteins, supporting immune function, and regulating hormones.

What can happen if you have fatty liver?

A healthy liver contains little or no fat. Fatty liver disease develops when excess fat accumulates in and around the liver. This can lead to serious health issues, including diabetes, kidney disease, heart disease, high blood pressure, and liver cancer.

It can also result in hepatic fibrosis, which is scarring of the liver, and can progress to cirrhosis, a more advanced and potentially life-threatening form of liver dysfunction.

There are two main types: alcoholic fatty liver disease (AFLD), which is linked to excessive alcohol consumption, and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), which can occur in individuals with low or no alcohol intake. Both types often show no symptoms in the early stages.

What are the causes?

Fatty liver disease often results from multiple factors including obesity, diets rich in saturated fats and refined carbohydrates, and high blood fat levels. Very rapid weight loss can also contribute to its development.

Certain medical conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and some autoimmune diseases increase the risk. Some medications, such as long-term steroids can also play a role. While rare, fatty liver can develop during pregnancy. It can also be influenced by genetic factors, though this is less common.

Excessive alcohol intake significantly impacts liver health, with AFLD being common among heavy drinkers. For specific guidelines on alcohol consumption, visit the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) website.

Remember, individual alcohol metabolism can vary based on health conditions, medications, sensitivity, and age. If you're pregnant, planning a pregnancy, breastfeeding, or under 18 years old, you should not drink any alcohol.

Looking after your liver

Preventing fatty liver disease involves dealing with the underlying causes. Many risk factors can be managed through lifestyle changes. Focus on maintaining a healthy weight, eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, and moderating or avoiding alcohol. These steps are essential for both liver health and overall well-being.

You can visit your local health service to have regular check-ups, identify risk factors for disease, and discuss ways of achieving a healthy lifestyle.

Meet the multifidus muscle: The key to spinal stability

The multifidus is a vital yet often overlooked muscle essential for spinal health. Understanding its role and learning how to strengthen it can improve spinal stability and overall well-being.



The multifidus muscle, consisting of many bundles, extends along your spine from the pelvis and tailbone to the neck. It plays a key role in protecting your spine and providing strength for movements such as back extension and rotation. By supporting the spine and reducing pressure on spinal discs, the multifidus helps minimise the risk of injury.

A strong multifidus helps maintain the spine's neutral zone — a relaxed, optimal

range of motion that requires minimal muscle effort. This helps reduce stress and pain, and improves function. Just like well-aligned car tyres ensure a smoother ride, a well-functioning multifidus supports the spine effectively.

When the multifidus is weak or injured, maintaining this safe, neutral zone becomes challenging. Extra effort is required to stabilise the spine, increasing strain on surrounding tissues and potentially causing pain and dysfunction. This is often experienced in the lower back (lumbar) area and is more likely if you've had back surgery.

Keeping the multifidus strong is essential. One effective exercise for this is the "Bird Dog," which also strengthens the core and shoulder muscles.

The multifidus is not the only muscle that supports your spine, and there are many strengthening exercises available. If you have a health condition that may affect your ability to exercise, check with your doctor first and ask for advice if you have any concerns.

Bird Dog instructions:

1

Start in a tabletop position on your hands and knees, with your hands in line with your shoulders and knees with your hips. Keep your spine straight and neutral.

2

Extend your right arm forward and left leg backward, keeping them parallel to the floor. Hold for 2-3 seconds then return to the starting position.

3

Repeat the movement with your left arm and right leg.

4

Repeat ten times on each side, and do two sets. Stop if you feel any pain.

Shedding light on selenium

Selenium is a trace mineral essential to our health, playing a crucial role in various bodily functions. Although needed only in small amounts, selenium is vital for maintaining our overall health and well-being.

What does selenium do in the body?

Selenium has several critical functions:

- **Antioxidant protection:** it helps protect your cells from damage.
- **Thyroid function:** it supports thyroid health and aids in hormone production, which regulates metabolism.
- **Immune system support:** selenium boosts the immune system, helping your body fight off infections and diseases.
- **DNA synthesis and repair:** assists in repairing DNA. For example, if your DNA gets damaged by things like sun exposure or pollution, selenium helps repair it so your cells can work properly.
- **DNA synthesis and repair:** assists in DNA synthesis and repair, crucial for cell function and longevity. For example, it helps repair DNA damaged by factors like sun exposure or pollution.

Are selenium supplements necessary?

A balanced diet typically provides adequate selenium and food is the best source.

However, certain people may benefit from supplements, such as those with digestive disorders such as Crohn's disease, thyroid diseases, cancer, and those living in areas with selenium-deficient soils.

Finding the right balance of selenium is crucial; we need only a small amount and excessive consumption can cause toxicity, whether from supplements or high-selenium foods. Consult a health professional before increasing your selenium intake. Signs of too much selenium include garlic-scented breath and a metallic taste in the mouth.

Foods high in selenium

Selenium is found in a range of foods, but the amount varies depending on the selenium content of the soil where the plants are grown and the animals reared.

In Australia the main sources are seafood, poultry and eggs, mushrooms, wholegrain products, and green vegetables including spinach, cauliflower, and cabbage.

Brazil nuts, native to South America, are a particularly rich source of selenium. Additionally, they're high in healthy fats, protein, fibre, and various vitamins

and minerals, including magnesium, manganese, phosphorus, and vitamin E.

Just one nut provides over the recommended daily intake of selenium, so they must be consumed in moderation.

It's advisable to check with a healthcare provider before starting any supplements or making drastic changes to your diet, especially if you have an existing health condition.



WORD SCRAMBLE PUZZLE

Try to unscramble the words in this worksheet. If you can't find the correct word the answers are on the back page. Good Luck!

1. **eilesnum** _____
A trace mineral essential for our health, found in Brazil nuts.
2. **soinsilltti** _____
A condition that occurs when your tonsils become infected.
3. **smerng** _____
Something (such as a virus or bacteria) that causes disease.
4. **smltifiduu** _____
A long muscle which supports your spine.
5. **lbrmau** _____
The lower back area.
6. **iirshosrc** _____
A serious disease of the liver that can be caused by drinking too much alcohol.
7. **irtirhtas** _____
Inflammation in the joints that causes stiffness and pain.
8. **ssheootytp** _____
Abnormal bony outgrowths or spurs.
9. **cerialagt** _____
A tough tissue that cushions our joints.
10. **eemaioltsb** _____
To change or process by a metabolic process.



Simple prawn and noodle stir-fry

Due to their nutritional benefits, prawns are considered among the healthiest foods in the world!

This stir-fry is a quick and nutritious meal packed with protein, omega-3 fatty acids, iron, vitamins, and essential minerals such as selenium, zinc, and iodine. Servings: 2-3

INGREDIENTS:

- 200g prawns, peeled & deveined
- 200g noodles
- ½ head of cabbage, shredded (or a bag of coleslaw mix)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp fresh ginger, grated
- 2 Tbsp soy sauce
- 2 Tbsp sesame oil
- Garnish: sesame seeds

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Cook noodles according to package instructions, drain and set aside.
2. In a large pan or wok, heat 1 Tbsp oil, add garlic and ginger and sauté until fragrant.
3. Add prawns, cook until opaque/pink (2-3 minutes), remove and set aside.
4. Add 1 Tbsp oil, add cabbage, and cook until wilted (3 minutes).
5. Stir in prawns, noodles and soy sauce, mix well.
6. Garnish with sesame seeds and serve hot.

Talking about tonsillitis

Our bodies contain many fascinating and unique organs. While we understand the function of most, the role of tonsils is often less understood. What are they, and what can go wrong with them?

The role of tonsils

You may know tonsils as the two 'bumps' that sit on either side of your throat. Along with the adenoids (located at the back of your nose) and other tonsil tissues at the back of your mouth, they form part of your immune system.

The tonsils work with your lymph glands to act as a first line of defence against pathogens (germs) entering through your mouth or nose. The tonsils help detect and fight infections, which make them susceptible to inflammation.

Tonsillitis: causes and symptoms

Tonsillitis occurs when the tonsils become inflamed due to exposure to viruses or bacteria. Children are more prone to tonsillitis than adults, as their tonsils are more active in the immune response. The risk decreases with age as the tonsils shrink and other parts of the immune system take over their functions.

Symptoms are generally mild and include: sore throat, difficulty swallowing, fever, swollen or tender lymph glands in the neck, tiredness, and bad breath.

Managing tonsillitis

While tonsillitis itself is not contagious, the infections that cause it, such as colds and flu, are. To prevent spreading these infections, keep affected individuals at home and practise good hygiene.

Tonsillitis usually improves within a few days with fluids and rest, but if symptoms persist or worsen, seek medical attention to avoid more serious complications. In cases of extreme symptoms such as difficulty breathing or inability to swallow, get emergency medical help immediately.

Understanding the role of tonsils and how to manage tonsillitis can help you better appreciate these small but mighty defenders.



Degenerative disc disease vs. arthritis

You may have heard of degenerative disc disease and arthritis and wondered about the difference. Let's explore each condition, how they relate, and how to manage them.

Degenerative disc disease (DDD)

DDD is a common condition caused by age-related 'wear and tear' on the spinal discs. Over time, degeneration can lead to pain, instability, and other symptoms. The neck and lower back regions are typically the most affected.

DDD can cause disc protrusion and bony spurs (osteophytes) to form on the vertebrae, causing the nerve openings to narrow. This can compress nerves, causing pain, numbness, or weakness in areas like the arms if the neck is affected, or legs if a lower back nerve is involved.

Pain from DDD may be triggered by activities such as bending, lifting, or sitting. Relief might be found by changing positions, lying down, or walking. Symptoms can range from minor irritation to severe pain.

Are DDD and OA related?

While they are different conditions, they can overlap, especially in the spine. Spinal OA often accompanies DDD, worsening joint pain and stiffness due to disc degeneration and the formation of bone spurs. Both conditions share common risk factors such as aging, obesity, and prior injuries.

Prevention and management

Although aging is inevitable, you can manage other risk factors through a healthy lifestyle. Key strategies include:

- Eating healthily: a balanced diet supports overall health and helps prevent obesity, reducing stress on the spine and joints.
- Quitting smoking: smoking impairs

Arthritis

Arthritis refers to various conditions that cause joint inflammation. Symptoms include joint pain, stiffness, swelling, and reduced motion. The main types are osteoarthritis (OA) and rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

OA is the most common form of arthritis and involves the breakdown of cartilage that cushions the joints, typically due to age and 'wear-and-tear'. OA can affect your vertebral cartilage and also lead to the growth of osteophytes.

RA is an autoimmune condition where your immune system attacks the joints, resulting in chronic (ongoing) inflammation. This can lead to bone damage and osteophytes. Genetic factors and prior joint injuries can contribute to RA.

blood flow and can contribute to disc degeneration and other spinal issues.

- Improving posture: this reduces strain on the spine and helps prevent further degeneration.
- Exercising: regular exercise strengthens muscles around the spine and joints. Incorporate cardio, strength training, and balance exercises.
- Stretching: stretch regularly to improve flexibility and support connective tissue health.

Understanding these conditions and taking proactive steps can improve your overall well-being.

INFLUENZA IN 2024

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.

Flu vaccine will be available from late April, 2024.

Questions to ask at your next doctor's visit

Asking questions is key to good communication with your doctor. To make the most of your visit, write down what you want to know in the area below. Bring this list to your next appointment so you remember what you wanted to ask.

DOCTOR'S NAME	DATE	TIME

1.
2.
3.
NOTES:

Puzzle Answers

1. Selenium
2. Tonsillitis
3. Germs
4. Multifidus
5. Lumbar
6. Cirrhosis
7. Arthritis
8. Osteophytes
9. Cartilage
10. Metabolise

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.