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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

DECEMBER 2025



STAY STRONG
FOR LIFE



EXPLAINING
COMMON RASHES



PLANT-BASED
'MEAT'



SUNLIGHT &
VITAMIN D

Compliments of your GP

Reflux explained: When stomach acid causes more than heartburn

Heartburn, also referred to as acid reflux, is the burning sensation in the chest or throat that many people experience after eating. Despite its name, it has nothing to do with the heart – it's actually a digestive issue.



Causes and symptoms

The oesophagus is the tube that carries food and drink from your mouth to your stomach. A ring of muscle at its lower end – the oesophageal sphincter – normally closes tightly after food enters the stomach. If this muscle weakens or doesn't fully close, stomach acid can flow back into the oesophagus, causing irritation and a burning feeling.

Other symptoms can include a sour taste, coughing, or hoarseness. Discomfort often worsens when lying down or bending over.

It's worth noting the difference between reflux and indigestion. Reflux causes the burning sensation in the chest or throat, while indigestion usually creates a feeling of fullness, bloating, or discomfort in the upper stomach.

Heartburn often occurs in the third trimester of pregnancy; ensure you consult your GP on which treatments are safe to use.

Silent reflux

Not everyone with reflux feels heartburn. Some people experience what's called silent reflux (or laryngopharyngeal reflux). This happens when small amounts of stomach acid or digestive enzymes travel higher than

the oesophagus and reach the larynx (voice box) and throat.

The larynx is sensitive and even a small amount of acid can cause irritation, leading to extra mucus, a sore throat, hoarse voice, or a persistent cough – especially after meals or when lying down. Silent reflux can be mistaken for allergies, asthma, or a lingering cold. If these symptoms don't go away, discuss them with your GP.

Can you prevent reflux?

Certain foods, drinks, and habits can trigger or worsen symptoms. These include spicy or fatty foods, citrus, chocolate, alcohol, coffee, being overweight, and smoking. Medications such as aspirin or anti-inflammatories can also irritate the stomach.

Try keeping a food and symptom diary to identify your personal triggers. Eating smaller, more frequent meals and avoiding lying down for at least two hours after eating may help. Raising the head of your bed slightly may reduce night-time reflux.

Maintaining a healthy weight, quitting smoking, and reducing alcohol intake can also ease symptoms and improve overall digestive health.

When to see your doctor

Occasional heartburn is common, but if symptoms are frequent, severe, or interfere with daily life, it may indicate gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD) – basically a more persistent form of acid reflux. Long-term reflux can damage the oesophagus or tooth enamel, or cause a chronic cough, so persistent symptoms should be checked.

Remember that chest discomfort isn't always due to reflux. If you experience severe chest pain, or pain with shortness of breath, dizziness, arm pain, sweating, or an irregular or rapid heartbeat, seek emergency medical care immediately.

Don't just put up with heartburn – if it keeps coming back, get it checked.

Our newsletter is free - please take a copy with you

Solving the mystery of common rashes



Rashes can be worrying – itchy, red, bumpy, and unsightly. While they might seem to appear mysteriously, most have simple explanations and can be managed at home.

Eczema (atopic dermatitis)

Eczema is common, especially in childhood. It usually appears as dry, scaly patches that itch, often on hands, elbows, or behind knees. Eczema often flares with changes in weather, stress, or irritants like soaps and detergents.

For many, the itching can make daily activities or sleep uncomfortable. Moisturising with eczema-recommended products is important, and your GP can advise on additional treatment if needed.

Contact dermatitis

This rash appears when your skin reacts to substances like nickel, cosmetics, plants, or cleaning products. Avoiding the trigger usually helps, though identifying it can sometimes take a little detective work.

Hives (urticaria)

Raised, itchy welts that come and go quickly are usually hives, often caused by allergies, infections, or stress. Antihistamines may help calm the reaction, but if swelling affects your face or breathing, seek urgent medical care.

Heat rash

Red spots or blisters that appear in hot, humid conditions are usually heat rash. Cool the skin and wear loose clothing to help it settle.

Fungal infections (tinea)

Fungal infections thrive in warm, moist areas such as feet, groin, under breasts, or between skin folds. They're often named for where they appear – for example, athlete's foot or jock itch. Symptoms can include redness, itching, stinging, blisters or pustules, and scaly skin. Patches that form rings are commonly called ringworm – although no worms are involved!

Babies are prone to rashes under their chin and in neck folds due to moisture from dribbling. These rashes may be fungal, but can also be simple irritation.

General treatment

For most common rashes, keeping skin clean and dry, avoiding scratching, wearing loose cotton clothing, and following the recommended care from your doctor or pharmacist helps.

Most mild rashes improve with simple care, but persistent or unexplained skin problems should be assessed to ensure the right treatment and prevent complications. Always consult your GP if a rash spreads quickly, is painful, or comes with fever or other symptoms.

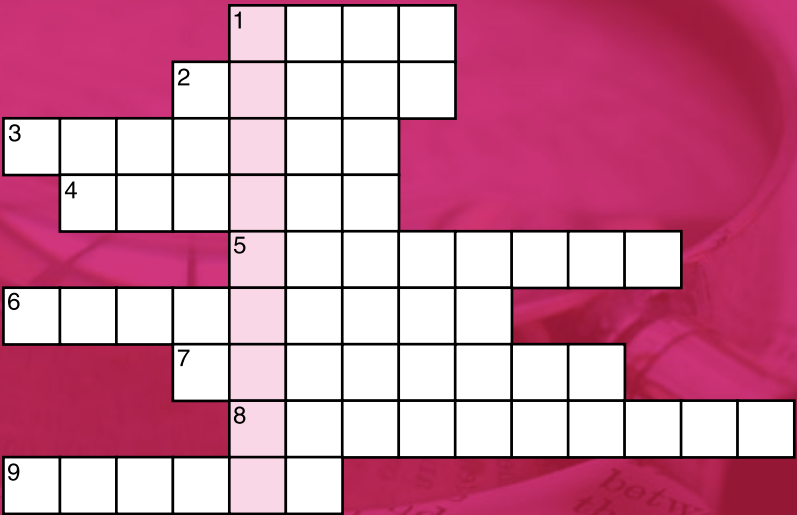
Sometimes, solving a rash puzzle takes an expert eye!

HEALTHY HABITS HIDDEN WORD PUZZLE

Work out the answers to the clues in the puzzle and find the hidden word in the bold rectangles. If you're unsure of any answers, check the newsletter for clues!

CLUES:

1. The food we eat.
2. Plant substances that help with digestion.
3. Feeling tired or lacking energy.
4. A common rash with dry, scaly, itchy patches, often on hands, elbows, or behind the knees.
5. Being physically strong.
6. Also called acid reflux.
7. Preservative linked to increased health risks.
8. The tube that carries food and drink from your mouth to your stomach.
9. Also called voice box.



ANSWERS ON THE BACK PAGE

What are plant-based meat alternatives?

In recent years in Australia, plant-based food products designed to resemble meat have grown in popularity, offering an alternative to traditional meat.

Plant-based meat alternatives are made from ingredients such as soy, peas, lentils, wheat gluten, and grains. They're designed to replicate the flavour, texture, and appearance of meat. Common examples include plant-based burger patties, sausages, and mince.

Nutrition check: meat vs plant options

Lean meat, poultry, fish, eggs, tofu, nuts, seeds, and legumes are an important source of protein and other nutrients such as iron, zinc, vitamin B12, iodine, and essential fatty acids.

Lean red meat is particularly rich in iron, zinc, and B12, which are more easily absorbed by the body than the iron and zinc found in plant foods. However, pairing plant-based iron sources with vitamin C-rich foods can help support absorption.

Plant-based meat alternatives provide fibre and protein and can provide many of the same nutrients as animal foods. However, they don't naturally contain vitamin B12 unless fortified. Non-meat diets that include milk, eggs, legumes, nuts, and seeds can provide most essential nutrients.

Smoked, salted, and preserved foods such as sausages, bacon, and salami can be high in saturated fat, salt, and other additives that may increase health risks, so they should be eaten only occasionally.

Plant-based alternatives may also include additives and be high in salt or sugar. Checking nutrition labels helps ensure a balanced intake of nutrients.

The Australian dietary guidelines provide advice about the amount and kinds of foods that we need to eat for good health. See: www.eatforhealth.gov.au

Environmental impact

Some studies suggest plant-based 'meat' generally uses less water and land, and produces fewer greenhouse gas emissions than conventional red meat production. However this can vary by product and production method.

Finding the right balance

Whatever options you choose, aim for a nutritious diet that's balanced and varied. If you're cutting back on meat, your GP or dietitian can help you maintain healthy iron and vitamin B12 levels.

Quick tips for reading labels:

- Compare per 100g, not per serve
- Choose products lower in sodium and saturated fat
- Look for minimal added sugar and fewer additives
- Check for B12 or iron fortification in plant-based options
- Use the Health Star Rating as a quick guide

Vitamin D: Sunshine for strong bones and a brighter mood



A little sunlight helps your body produce vitamin D, which supports healthy bones, teeth, and overall wellbeing.

Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium – essential for healthy bones and teeth. Low levels can lead to weak bones, muscle aches, and fatigue. Research suggests vitamin D may also support immune and mood health.

How much sun do we need?

In most of Australia in summer, short periods of sun exposure on hands, face, and arms, for a few minutes several times a week, are usually enough for healthy vitamin D levels. Requirements vary depending on location, season, and skin type.

These are general guidelines for adults; babies and young children require stricter sun protection. We also need to balance vitamin D needs with the risk of skin damage and skin cancer from too much sun exposure. Check local UV levels and refer to reputable sources, such as Healthy Bones

Australia, or the Cancer Council Australia, for guidance. Never let your skin burn.

Who's at risk of low vitamin D?

Even in sunny Australia, about one in three adults have some level of vitamin D deficiency, especially in winter. You may be at higher risk if you:

- spend most days indoors or always cover your skin
- have naturally darker skin tones, as they absorb less UV
- are older, because skin produces less vitamin D
- have a medical condition or take medication that affects absorption
- are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Food and supplements

Some foods, like oily fish, liver, eggs, and fortified products, contain small amounts of vitamin D, but sunlight is the main source.

You can't get too much vitamin D from sunlight, but excess supplements can affect your kidneys and heart. Check with your doctor if you have health conditions, and follow the recommended dose.

A little time outdoors can lift your spirits and help keep your body strong for the year ahead. If you're unsure about your vitamin D levels, or safe sun exposure for you and your family, talk to your GP.



EASY BLACK BEAN BALLS AND TOMATO SAUCE

Packed with protein, fibre, and vegetables, these black bean and nut balls make a quick, nutritious meal.

INGREDIENTS

BALLS:

- 1 can (400g) black beans, drained and rinsed
- ½ cup walnuts or cashews, roughly chopped
- 1 small carrot, grated
- 1 small zucchini, grated
- ½ cup rolled oats
- 1 egg
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 2 tbsp olive oil

QUICK SAUCE:

- 1 can Italian-flavoured chopped tomatoes
- 1 Tbsp tomato paste
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- Pinch of salt and pepper

METHOD:

1. Mash black beans in a bowl. Add nuts, grated vegetables, garlic, oats, egg, and paprika. Mix well.
2. Form into small balls (8–10).
3. Heat olive oil in a non-stick pan over medium heat.
4. Cook the balls, turning gently, for 5–6 minutes until golden on all sides.
5. In a pot, combine chopped tomatoes, tomato paste, herbs, salt, and pepper. Simmer for 5 minutes.
6. Add the cooked balls to the sauce and heat through for 2–3 minutes.
7. Serve with rice, pasta, or a fresh salad.

Healthy ageing:

Keeping muscles strong as you grow older



Staying active as you age isn't just about keeping fit – it's about maintaining the strength and mobility that let you keep doing the things you enjoy. From gardening to beach walks, strong muscles help you stay independent and confident at any age.

Why muscle strength matters

After around age 40, adults naturally start to lose muscle mass and strength. This can make daily tasks harder and increase the risk of falls or injuries. The good news is that regular activity, especially resistance or strength training, can slow, stop, or even reverse this process.

Resistance training builds and maintains muscle and can be as effective as aerobic exercise for heart health, blood pressure, cholesterol, and diabetes risk.

Making exercise easy

You don't need heavy weights, complicated routines, or a gym membership. Start with simple exercises using your body weight and resistance bands, and once you get stronger, you can add weights.

Try easy moves like squats, wall push-ups, or step-ups first. Do each exercise 10–15 times, and repeat once or twice for a complete session, working until your muscles feel challenged. Aim for two to three sessions a week, with rest days in between.

You can also include activities like walking, water aerobics, or swimming to support strength, mobility, and joint health.

For tips on safe exercises, you can consult health organisations or local fitness centres.

Fuel for stronger muscles

As we age, our bodies become less efficient at using protein because muscle-building slows, digestion may decline, and hormone levels that support muscles decrease. Older adults may need slightly more protein to help maintain muscle strength and overall health.

Include foods like lean meats, fish, eggs, dairy, beans, lentils, nuts, and seeds. Spread protein across your meals — for example, yogurt or eggs at breakfast, and tofu, beans, or chicken at lunch and dinner. Muscles work best with hydration, so keep water handy and eat hydrating foods like fruit and salads.

Start safely

If you're new to exercise or have a medical condition, check with your GP before starting a new routine.

Keeping your muscles strong is one of the best investments for healthy ageing. With good nutrition, regular movement and simple strength training, you can stay active, strong, and independent for many years.

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. Diet | 6. Heartburn |
| 2. Fibre | 7. Nitrates |
| 3. Fatigue | 8. Oesophagus |
| 4. Eczema | 9. Larynx |
| 5. Strength | |

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.



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.