

ATHERFIELD MEDICAL & SKIN CANCER CLINIC

65 Lead Street
Yass 2582

P: (02) 6226 1888



Dr D Harrison

BM, BS, DRANZCOG, DCH, FRACGP, MSportsMed
Graduated Flinders University of S.A.

Dr R Ahluwalia

MBBS (Pune), FRACGP, G. Dip MH (GP)
Graduate Armed Forces Medical College, Pune (India)

Dr Nahid Afrin

MBBS (Bangladesh)

Dr Matthew Thompson

ACCSCMS (Skin Cancer College of Australasia),
FRACGP, MBBS (ANU), BMedSci (UTS)

Dr Tiffanie Goh

BMedSc (Hons), MChD (ANU)

Dr Madeline Evans

MD (USyd) BA - Comms (UTS)

We are an accredited general practice and a Family Medicine Training Practice.

All practitioners are vocationally registered or are in advanced training for vocational registration.

All our practitioners are involved in ongoing medical education.

SURGERY HOURS AND SERVICES

We provide a complete range of general practitioner medical care.

Consultations are by appointment.

Monday – Thursday 8:30am to 5:30pm

Friday 8:30am to 5:00pm

Saturday 8:30am to 11:00am

Public holidays excluded.

APPOINTMENT TIMES

The duration of your appointment is flexible, and you will be asked if the time allocated is sufficient for your needs. If in doubt, please ask our reception staff.

Nobody likes to be kept waiting. We are aware of this, however the unpredictable nature of medical practice means that doctors sometimes have to run behind time. We sincerely regret any inconvenience caused.

TELEPHONING YOUR DOCTOR

If your call is assessed as urgent it may be transferred to the doctor on call if your preferred practitioner is unavailable. If you wish to leave a message for your doctor to return your call please provide a phone number, a brief indication as to the content of your call and a time that you will be available.

YOUR DOCTOR

JULY 2024



UNDERSTANDING GENETICS



EXERCISE & BRAIN BENEFITS



EXPLAINING 'SLIPPED DISCS'



NATURAL MUSCLE SUPPORT

Compliments of your GP

Understanding pre-diabetes and why it matters

As Type 2 diabetes is now a major health issue, attention is also on pre-diabetes. By identifying and addressing pre-diabetes early, our aim is to help people manage their health risks before they worsen.

What is pre-diabetes?

A healthy body produces insulin, a hormone that helps move glucose (sugar) from the bloodstream into cells, where it's used for energy. In pre-diabetes, this process is disrupted – either because the body doesn't produce enough insulin, or because the cells have become resistant to its effects. This leads to higher blood glucose levels, but not high enough to be classified as type 2 diabetes.

Approximately one in six adults over 25 are affected by pre-diabetes, and without intervention, about one in three of them will develop type 2 diabetes within ten years. Additionally, people with pre-diabetes face an increased risk of cardiovascular disease.

Are some people more at risk?

Modifiable factors that increase the risk for pre-diabetes are the same as those for type 2 diabetes, including:

- being overweight – excess body fat, especially around your middle, causes resistance to insulin
- low levels of exercise
- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol

Non-modifiable risk factors include having close family members with type 2 diabetes, as well as belonging to certain ethnicities, such as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Māori, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, South Asian, and North African.

You can check your risk with the Australian Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment tool at:



Scan this QR Code with your phone's camera to access the link...



What can I do if I have pre-diabetes?

Pre-diabetes serves as a warning, giving you a chance to make changes that can help reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes. The good news is that pre-diabetes is a condition that responds well to healthy lifestyle changes.

The best things you can do include:

- Follow a healthy diet. Include a variety of fruits and vegetables, high-fibre complex carbohydrates like whole grains and legumes, and low-fat, lean proteins such as fish, poultry, or plant-based sources.
- Maintain a healthy body weight by following a sensible eating plan.
- Being active, aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate activity every day. Anything you can do to move more is beneficial. Include cardio and strength training, and progress gradually.

The health and lifestyle recommendations for managing pre-diabetes are also beneficial for everyone. Eating well, staying active, and adopting other healthy habits are great practices. If you need guidance or support to make these changes, we're here to help.



Learn about the risk factors for pre-diabetes and discover effective prevention strategies.

Our newsletter is free! Please take a copy with you.

Mind matters: how exercise boosts brain health

We usually notice our bodies changing with age, but may overlook how our brains can change too. While physical activity is usually associated with fitness, it also benefits brain health by supporting grey matter and white matter, which are vital parts of the brain.

Clarifying grey matter and white matter

Grey matter and white matter are crucial for your mental and physical functions. Grey matter, mainly found in the outer layer of the brain known as the cerebral cortex, is your brain's 'control centre'. This is where most of your brain's processing takes place. It's involved in functions such as muscle control, memory, emotions, decision-making, and more.

White matter, found beneath the grey matter, acts like pathways connecting different regions of the brain. These connections enable different parts of your brain to communicate and work together. This teamwork is crucial for co-ordinating complex tasks like sensory processing, controlling your body, learning, memory, and decision-making.

How physical activity supports grey matter

As you grow older, the amount of grey matter in the brain can start to decrease. This can

lead to cognitive decline, which is a gradual loss of thinking abilities such as: learning, memory, attention span and reasoning.

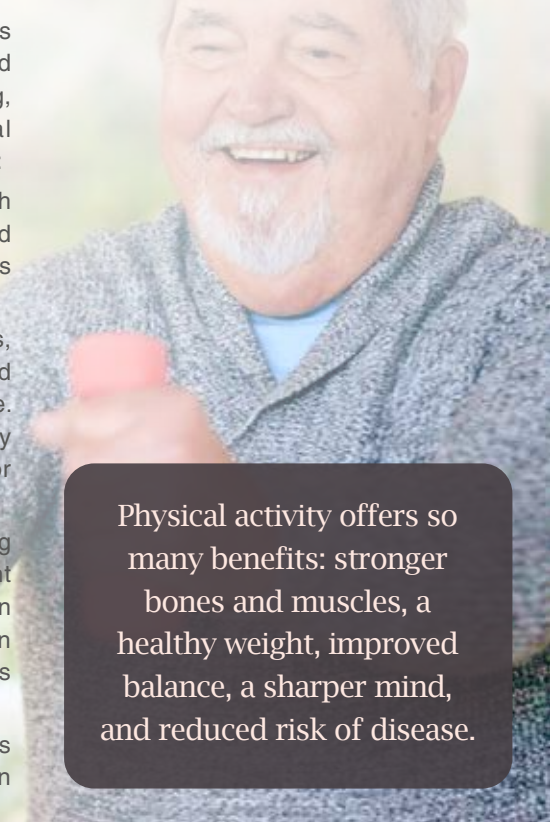
However, there's good news: regular physical activity can help protect grey matter and keep the brain functioning better.

Physical activity can be as simple as everyday activities like housework and gardening, or as structured as jogging, swimming or gym workouts. Physical activity or exercise helps your brain by:

- improving general health, which increases blood flow, oxygen and nutrients to your brain and encourages the growth of new brain cells
- increasing certain brain chemicals, promoting adaptability and potentially slowing cognitive decline. This can lead to an increase in grey matter, especially in areas crucial for memory and learning.
- reducing stress and improving mood, both of which are important for brain health. Stress has been shown to have negative effects on the brain, so anything that helps reduce stress is beneficial.

In summary, regular physical activity is crucial for maintaining a healthy brain

as we age. By protecting and potentially increasing grey matter, exercise helps keep our minds sharp. Whether it's a walk in the park, a swim, or a bike ride, staying active is a simple and enjoyable way to support brain health.



Physical activity offers so many benefits: stronger bones and muscles, a healthy weight, improved balance, a sharper mind, and reduced risk of disease.

WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF ACROSTIC PUZZLES!

In this puzzle, you'll find seven clues; as you solve each one you'll reveal a letter in the coloured square.

These letters will form a word - your task is to find the hidden word by solving all the clues. All of the answers can be found throughout the newsletter articles, but if you're stuck check the back page.

CLUES:

1. The correct term for a 'slipped disc' is disc _____.
2. What is a mineral involved in muscle and nerve function?
3. What condition occurs when the body doesn't produce enough insulin or cells become resistant to its effects?
4. What hormone helps move glucose from the bloodstream into cells?
5. What root vegetable may help reduce inflammation, aid recovery, and ease muscle tenderness?
6. Genes are _____ from your parents.
7. What term describes the way a person lives, including their habits, attitudes, and daily activities?

1																			
2																			
3																			
4																			
5																			
6																			
7																			

Hidden word hint: What term describes a state of being free from illness and in good physical and mental condition?

Answers can be found on the back page

Find natural support for tight or sore muscles

Do your muscles feel tight or tender? Muscle soreness can be uncomfortable - whether it's due to exercise, stress, or daily activities. Fortunately, nature might offer some relief – certain foods have been found to help relax tightness and ease discomfort.

The mineral magnesium is involved in muscle and nerve function, supporting the energy production required for proper muscle contraction and relaxation. Tart cherries are a good source of magnesium, as well as having powerful anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. Tart cherries have made headlines as an athletic aid; and may reduce loss of muscle strength, soreness, and help speed up recovery. Tart cherry juice is the best source.

Can't find tart cherries? Beetroot juice is also studied for its uses in the athletic world. It contains dietary nitrates which show potential in boosting athletic performance by increasing blood flow and oxygen to muscles. Beetroot also contains betalains, (pigments that provide its vibrant colour), which may reduce inflammation, aid recovery, and ease muscle tenderness.

If beetroot isn't to your taste, try watermelon juice. As well as antioxidants,

it contains l-citrulline, an amino acid which may help increase exercise endurance by aiding muscle function. Drinking watermelon juice before and after exercise may reduce muscle soreness. That's therapy with a delicious flavour!

Turmeric has been shown to soothe inflammation and ease pain. Its active ingredient, curcumin, may reduce the discomfort and muscle injury that can result from exercise.

Whether you exercise or not, these natural remedies may offer benefits for your muscles as well as your overall wellbeing. However it's crucial to use caution and moderation before making drastic changes to your diet - follow recommended dietary guidelines and be aware of potential side effects.

If you're considering taking supplements, consult with a healthcare professional to ensure they're safe for you, and won't interact with other medications or medical conditions. Remember, a healthy and balanced diet is generally the best approach to maintaining optimal overall health. If you'd like advice on diet and exercise, we're happy to help.



Creamy curried leek and white bean soup

Winter calls for comforting dishes that are easy to prepare. This soup combines warming curry spices with the wholesome goodness of leeks and white beans. Great for the budget too!

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 large leeks, trimmed & thinly sliced
- 2 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 tsps curry powder
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 2 x 400g cans of white beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 Litre vegetable or chicken stock
- Fresh coriander or parsley, for garnish (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS:

- In a large pot, heat the olive oil over medium heat.
- Add the sliced leeks and minced garlic to the pot. Cook and keep stirring for about 5 minutes.
- Stir in the curry powder and cumin, and cook for another minute or until fragrant.
- Add the stock and the drained and rinsed white beans to the pot, stir to combine.
- Bring the soup to a boil, reduce the heat to low, cover pot and simmer gently for about 15-20 minutes.
- Blend the soup until smooth. Season with salt and pepper if desired.

Garnish and serve hot with pappadums or fresh crusty bread. Enjoy!

What does a 'slipped disc' actually mean?

You've probably heard of a slipped disc. It's a common spinal injury which can cause severe pain. But what does this term really mean?

A 'slipped disc' might sound like a disc has dislodged or moved, but that's not quite accurate. To understand what really happens, a basic understanding of spinal anatomy is helpful.

Between each vertebra in your spine, there's a disc that acts like a rubbery cushion. Each disc has a soft, jelly-like core surrounded by tough cartilage. When someone mentions a 'slipped disc,' they're referring to the jelly-like center pushing through the cartilage, causing a bulge or herniation. So the correct term is 'disc herniation'—nothing actually slips.

A herniated disc can press on a nearby spinal nerve. Just as standing on a garden hose blocks the flow of water, pressure on nerve tissue changes the messages that travel along this nerve. This is why pain is not always felt at the injury site. A disc herniation in your neck may affect an arm and a disc herniation in your low back may affect a leg. You might experience burning or stinging pain, weakness or numbness in the limb involved.

In rare cases, a herniation can compress the nerves that control your bladder and bowel. If you experience incontinence, or numbness around your anal area, seek medical help urgently.

How to prevent a herniated disc

As always, prevention is best for back problems. To reduce your risk, quit smoking or never start - it harms discs as it does other tissues. If you have pre-diabetes or diabetes, manage it carefully. If you're overweight, especially with excess belly fat, work on reaching a healthier weight.

Exercise regularly, keep flexible and strengthen your core; stretching, cycling, swimming, and walking all help maintain good core strength and flexibility. It's also important to use correct posture and techniques when carrying out daily tasks, especially lifting.

Can a herniated disc be treated?

A herniated disc can sometimes heal on its own, a process known as spontaneous resorption; and treatments like rest, ice, heat, and pain relief can aid recovery. However, if you have ongoing or recurring back issues, see your doctor for an evaluation and treatment.



Understanding genes and genetic disorders

Have you ever wondered why you have certain traits, like the colour of your eyes or the shape of your nose? It's all in the genes! Let's look the fascinating world of genetics.

The basics of genetics

Genes are small sections of DNA within chromosomes in the cell nucleus. Humans typically have 46 chromosomes, which are inherited from both parents. Together, chromosomes and genes are integral to life; determining your physical features, shaping your personality and influencing your health from birth to adulthood.

Understanding genetics involves studying genes, heredity, and how traits are passed across generations. This knowledge helps predict disease risks and guide treatment.

What is a genetic disorder?

A genetic disorder arises from abnormalities in genes or chromosomes. While some disorders can be directly inherited from parents, others follow complex genetic inheritance patterns. A genetic disorder may affect how your body develops and functions, and can be evident at birth or develop later in life.

For instance, cystic fibrosis is a common genetic condition involving a malfunction in the body's fluid-producing system. As a result, thick mucus builds up in the lungs and other organs, leading to respiratory issues and infections.

Similarly, Down syndrome occurs due to the presence of an extra chromosome, causing varying degrees of intellectual disability and distinct physical traits.

Genetic disorders vs. family diseases

It's important to understand the difference between genetic disorders and diseases that run in the family. While both involve genetic factors, family diseases are often influenced by a combination of genetic and shared environmental factors. For example:

- Certain gene mutations can increase the risk of breast cancer, however not all cases stem from genetics.
- Heart disease and type 2 diabetes may have a genetic component, but they're also influenced by family history, and lifestyle choices like diet and exercise.

Implications of genetic disorders

It's your choice whether you're screened for inherited diseases. Talk to your GP about your family history and any concerns you have, they can advise you about your risk and whether you should take any action.

Genetic counselling can help individuals understand their risks and make informed decisions about their health. Additionally, support groups are available for individuals and families affected by genetic disorders.

Living with a genetic disorder can present challenges, but it doesn't define who you are. With advancements in medicine and support systems, many people lead fulfilling lives despite their conditions.

In summary, understanding genetics and genetic disorders helps us to appreciate how complex and diverse we are. By embracing our uniqueness and supporting scientific research, we pave the way for a healthier future.

Living with a genetic disorder can present challenges, but it doesn't define who you are

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:		

OUR PRACTICE

FEES

To allow us to provide you with the services to which you have become accustomed, it is necessary for us to charge realistic fees.

A list of fees charged by our practitioners is available on the practice notice board. Arrangements for DVA patients are unchanged. Bulk billing should not be anticipated for any medical service.

Services rendered out of hours may attract the recommended fee, as does the provision of repeat prescriptions when the patient does not need or request to see the doctor.

If you have any difficulty or query with your account, do not hesitate to discuss the matter with the doctor.

All practitioners of the medical service provide home visits to patients who are unable to attend the rooms.

FEEDBACK

We are committed to improving the quality of the services we provide. We need your feedback. Tell us about the good points of our service, but more importantly, tell us about the areas in which you feel our service can be improved. You may be sure that your opinion will be valued and acted upon if possible. If you have a complaint, we will do everything we can to satisfy your complaint, but in the event that our best efforts are inadequate, you are invited to contact the Health Care Complaints Commission, Locked Mail Bag 18, Strawberry Hills, NSW, Telephone: 1800 043159.

YOUR DOCTOR is a service to patients of Atherfield Medical & Skin Cancer Clinic. Each edition contains accurate and up-to-date information about health issues relevant to you and your family. It will also have news and matters of interest about the practice and services available to you. By keeping each edition you will soon build up a library of useful and important knowledge which can help you to get healthy and stay that way. Let us know if there are any particular topics you would like to see dealt with in future editions of YOUR DOCTOR.

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. HERNIATION
2. MAGNESIUM
3. PREDIABETES
4. INSULIN
5. BEETROOT
6. INHERITED
7. LIFESTYLE

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.