

Your Doctor

SEPTEMBER 2010



Take good care of your back!

Green Lane Medical Centre
295 Green Lane
Newtown NSW 1234

Telephone:
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After hours: 9123 9876
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General Practitioners:

DR JAMES BRODIE
MB BS Dip(Obst) RACOG
Performs minor surgery. Experienced in the broad range of general practice to all age groups

DR RACHEL TAN
MB BS FRACGP Dip(Obst) RACOG
Family practitioner, trained in Australia and the UK, with special interests in women's and children's health.

DR ANDREW JONES
MB BS DRACOG
Graduated from Sydney University in 1993. His special interests include child and adolescent health, obstetrics and sports medicine.

The doctors have satisfied the training requirements of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and are on the Vocational Register of General Practitioners.

Office Staff:

Ellen Grimaldi (Practice Manager)
Marcella Bovell
Louise Summers
Mary McKay

Surgery Hours and Services

Consultations are by appointment:
Monday to Friday 8.00am–6.00pm,
Saturday 8.00am–11.00am.

Urgent medical problems dealt with promptly.

Home visits are made when necessary. If you are in need of a home visit, please contact the surgery as soon as possible after 8am.

After-Hours urgent medical problems — at night, on weekends or public holidays — will be attended by the locum service. Call 123 9876.

Green Lane Medical Centre

Nearly everyone experiences back pain at some stage. While there are other potential causes, MOST back pain is *musculo-skeletal* in origin. It can be quite severe, although in most cases it is short-lived and can be managed with simple measures including heat packs, pain relieving medications and gentle exercises. Bed rest should be limited as movement is needed for recovery.

The back is a complex structure incorporating the bony spinal column of *vertebrae*, fibrous discs between each vertebra (*intervertebral discs*), ligaments that hold the spine together, joints between vertebrae and many layers of muscles that support it all. The spinal cord and all the nerves supplying the body travel within the space behind the vertebrae and the intervertebral discs. Pain can arise from any of these structures.

The back is subject to many stresses and strains in the process of daily living. Muscles and ligaments can be strained by poor posture, improper or heavy lifting or by sudden awkward movements. Sometimes just a small movement will be the 'straw that breaks the camel's back'. Being overweight also puts extra strain on the back. Discs may become worn and can bulge or rupture. Sometimes this causes inflammation leading to pain or pressure on spinal nerves, although many people have bulging discs with no pain. Some specific causes of back pain include:

- *Arthritis* in the joints of the spine can cause pain and sometimes narrowing of the space around the spinal cord, which can put pressure on the spinal nerves.
- *Sciatica* is pain that shoots through the buttock and down the back of the leg. This is caused by irritation of the sciatic nerve, either from a bulging disc or narrowing of the surrounding bony area.

- *Scoliosis* is a condition of abnormal spinal curvature that can lead to poor muscle function and back pain.
- *Osteoporosis* (brittle bones) can weaken the vertebrae, ultimately causing a collapse within the bone known as a 'compression fracture'.
- Other causes of back pain include infections, cancer and diseases affecting the blood vessels, kidneys, gall bladder and other abdominal organs.



Physical therapies involving massage, heat/ice, ultrasound and muscle-release techniques may be helpful in reducing pain. As pain improves, exercises to improve flexibility and strengthen core back and abdominal muscles will help to prevent further episodes. Sitting causes the greatest pressure on the intervertebral discs. Back pain sufferers in particular need to limit this activity and take regular 'movement breaks'.

If back pain does not improve with less invasive treatments, occasionally injections of cortisone around the spinal cord or spinal joints may be used. Surgery, for example to fuse (join) vertebrae or remove bone that is pressing on nerves, is used only if other treatments fail.

Preventing back pain requires regular exercise to strengthen core muscles that support the back. Good posture for sitting, standing and lifting is vital – always avoid twisting and lifting simultaneously.

READERS!
Enter our competition
and **WIN!**
Details inside

Inside

- The many benefits of fruit
- Diabetic ketoacidosis
- Extra virgin olive oil for your heart?



The many benefits of fruit

Fruit is the edible, fleshy part of a plant, which has developed from flowers. Nuts and some vegetables such as tomatoes, cucumbers and beans are biologically fruits. But in practice we restrict the term fruit to sweet tasting plant products.



Fruit makes an important nutritional contribution to our daily diet by providing vitamins (especially vitamin C), minerals and fibre. The fibre in fruit is rich in pectin and gums, which slow down the absorption of nutrients into the bloodstream and also help lower blood cholesterol. Fibre also creates bulk, which makes fruit a satisfying part of any meal or a fulfilling snack.

Yellow and red fruits like mangoes, apricots and watermelon are rich sources of *beta-carotene* (the building block for vitamin A). Fruits are also a valuable source of antioxidants, which are beneficial to health. Whole fruit is preferable to juice because it is higher in fibre and nutrients. However it is better to have some pure fruit juice than no fruit. Fruit cordials are only a sugary drink.

Fruits perish easily. The vitamin content of fresh fruit diminishes once the fruit is bruised, damaged or peeled. Canned fruit packed with no added sugar has a similar nutritional value to fresh fruit, although some of the vitamin C is destroyed by heat in the canning process. Eaten in moderation, dried fruits make healthy snacks. Dried figs contain useful amounts of calcium and dried apricots contain iron. Dried fruit contains a high concentration of natural sugars and it is easy to eat too much.

Everyone should try to eat at least two pieces of a variety of fruit each day. With virtually no fat and refreshing flavours, fruit is an ideal way to finish a meal.

Did you know?

Swimmers who *hyperventilate* (over breathe) before holding their breath underwater may be putting themselves at risk of brain injury and potential drowning.

Some believe that this practice can store up extra oxygen for the swim. In fact, hyperventilation temporarily lowers the blood levels of carbon dioxide – the waste product we breathe out. This sends a signal to the brain that we do not need to breathe, causing the brain to actually become low in oxygen to the point of not functioning properly.

A recent case reported in the Medical Journal of Australia highlights the risk of this practice. Two fit medical students hyperventilated before competing to see who could swim the furthest underwater. Both became unconscious and required resuscitation. Similar cases overseas have resulted in brain injury and drowning.

Those who dive or swim need to be aware of the risks before experimenting with such techniques.



Good Health on the Menu

Baked apples are a simple, old fashioned and tasty dessert.

Baked Apples (serves 4)

- 4 cooking apples
- 4 dried apricots, cut into strips
- 4 dates, cut into strips
- 2 tabs blanched almonds, roughly chopped
- 1 tsp honey
- A pinch each of cinnamon and ground cloves
- The zest and juice of an orange
- A little brown sugar



Using an apple corer remove the cores of the apples. Cut a shallow slit around the middle of the apples. Mix the remaining ingredients, except the sugar and orange juice. Fill the apple centres with this mixture and sprinkle a little sugar over each. Place them in an ovenproof dish. Add orange juice. Bake at 180°C for 1 hour, or until soft.

READER COMPETITION

Be in the running to WIN a \$50 shopping voucher

1) Just answer the following question: Which article did you like best in this issue of Your Doctor?

2) Tick the box next to your preferred voucher below:

- Coles Myer Ltd
- Target Australia Ltd
- K Mart Australia Ltd
- Angus & Robertson Book Stores
- JB Hi Fi



3) Post with your name and address on the back of the envelope to:

Your Doctor Voucher Competition
Unit 5/1 Almondbury Road
Mt Lawley WA 6050

Must be received by latest post marked 30/09/2010 to be in the running

THAT'S IT! GOOD LUCK!



Across: 2. Osteoporosis 4. Hyperventilate; 7. Polymuria; 8. Scoliosis
Down: 1. Polyphenolics; 3. Insulin; 5. Acidosis; 6. Enuresis.



Diabetic ketoacidosis is a serious illness

Diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) is the term used when a diabetic does not have enough *insulin* (the hormone needed to transport glucose into cells) leading to increased blood glucose levels, biochemical imbalance (*acidosis*) and dehydration. This can be fatal if not treated.



Symptoms include frequent urination (*polyuria*) or soaked nappies in infants, thirst and frequent drinking (*polydipsia*), needing to urinate at night (*nocturia*) or bedwetting (*enuresis*), weight loss, tiredness, nausea and vomiting, abdominal pain and confusion. The breath may smell sweet and chemical-

like due to the presence of *ketones*, which are produced when body tissues break down. DKA can progress rapidly, causing death if it is not promptly diagnosed and treated. Treatment involves replacing fluids and correcting insulin levels, usually in a specialised hospital setting.

DKA may affect up to a quarter of all newly diagnosed type 1 diabetics - in type 1 diabetes, the cells that produce insulin are destroyed causing insulin deficiency. It can also be caused by changes in insulin requirements with illness or trauma, inadvertent missed doses or insulin pump failure. Some diabetics may reduce their insulin in order to lose weight, a potentially disastrous strategy.

While newly diagnosed diabetics and their families need education about insulin and prevention of DKA, it is wise for everyone to be aware of the symptoms. The number of cases of type 1 diabetes in young people is increasing worldwide. Children and infants in particular should be checked immediately if thirst and urination increase, even if there is no family history of diabetes.

Myth and Fact

Myth

Taking aspirin before a long flight will help prevent blood clots in the legs (deep vein thrombosis – DVT).



Fact

Awareness of the increased risk of DVTs on long flights has risen greatly in recent years. Perhaps because aspirin is used to prevent strokes in those at risk, some believe that they can take aspirin prior to and during a long flight to prevent a clot forming in the legs.

In fact, research does not support this and aspirin has no role in preventing DVTs. It should be remembered that aspirin has side effects, including bleeding and stomach irritation, and should not be taken without good reason.

The recommended measures include doing regular leg muscle exercises to avoid blood pooling in the legs and keeping well hydrated during the flight. Ankle-knee graduated compression stockings are recommended for those who may be at increased risk including the obese, those with mobility problems and those with cancer, varicose veins or a history of blood clots. In those at significant risk, a heparin injection prior to flying may occasionally be recommended.

Painless swelling of feet and ankles is common after air travel and is not likely to be a DVT. However, pain or swelling in the calf or trouble breathing shortly after a long journey requires prompt medical attention.

Health reminder!

Next time you visit the doctor, ask for a blood pressure check. If it's normal, that's good news. If it's up, you may need further checks but could avoid a stroke.

Clever CROSSWORD

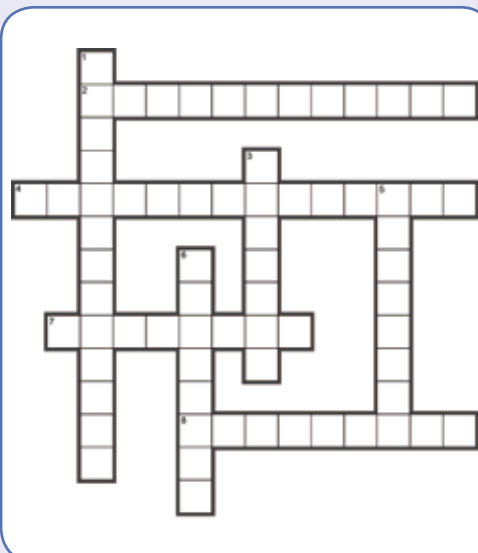
Each of the words can be found in this issue of "Your Doctor".
Answers on bottom of inside left hand page.

Across:

2. Disease of brittle bones
4. over breathe
7. frequent urination
8. A condition of abnormal spinal curvature

Down:

1. Anti-oxidant molecules found in extra virgin olive oil
3. The hormone needed to transport glucose into cells
5. Biochemical imbalance
6. Bedwetting





“Extra virgin” for your heart?



Dr Norman Swan
A matter of health

“Extra virgin” olive oil may not just be a marketing slogan.

One of the big differences between ‘refined’ olive oil and ‘extra-virgin’ olive oil is the level of *polyphenolic* molecules. These molecules not only add to the taste but also are powerful antioxidants.

A small study recruited people with recent heart attacks directly from the hospital ward. Over two week periods, people recovering from heart attacks were given 50ml each day of either extra-virgin olive oil or refined olive oil. In just these two weeks, the differences were significant. Two blood markers of inflammation (a sign that may indicate your arteries are being damaged by the immune system) were reduced when the people had



the extra-virgin olive oil. It has been suggested that these inflammatory factors help activate immune cells that bind cholesterol. These may become the ‘foam’ cells that accumulate to form **atherosclerosis**.

Extra virgin olive oil contains a rich mixture of complicated anti-oxidant molecules. Known as polyphenolics, these molecules typically add a bitter taste to many foods, including leafy green vegetables. In people at risk of heart disease, extra virgin olive oil may be the good oil – perhaps helping to quench the body’s inflammation and heart disease risk. Virgin olive oil is certainly a core part of the Mediterranean diet, which is known to extend life by several years in people who closely adhere to it.

In people who have had a heart attack, extra virgin olive oil is not a substitute for aspirin, cholesterol and blood pressure medications – all proven to reduce your chances of a repeat heart attack. It’s an add-on – but watch the calories!

Plan for end of life care

We make plans for many of life’s major events. However, the situation at the end of life is often that family members have to make decisions about medical care without being clear about the wishes of their loved one.

In some parts of the world, ‘advance care directives’ have been developed as a plan for a variety of medical contingencies. This plan is usually discussed with the person involved, their relatives and carers and the medical team. Having such a plan means that, when decisions have to be made, there is confidence in knowing the wishes of those who may no longer be able to speak for themselves.

American research indicates that those who have plans are highly likely to receive the type of care they requested – whether it be “all care possible” or “comfort care”.



If you are caring for an elderly or ill relative, it is a good idea to discuss openly with both them and the doctor what decisions they want made on their behalf, should the need arise.

Green Lane Medical Centre

This practice is committed to providing comprehensive care to all patients. The doctors are trained and experienced in the broad range of problems dealt with in general medical practice.

We believe your health is best managed by continuous care from the same source, rather than taking different problems to different places. But we will refer you for specialist opinions, investigations and treatment when necessary.

To provide adequate service and facilities for your needs it is necessary to charge realistic fees for treating you. Prompt payment of our account will help us keep fees down. Pensioners and Healthcare Card holders are treated at a discount through bulk-billing.

If you have any problems or queries with your account do not hesitate to discuss the matter with the doctor.

Nobody likes to be kept waiting. We are well aware of this and try very hard to adhere to our appointment schedules.

However, the unpredictable nature of medical practice is such that doctors sometimes have to run behind time. We sincerely regret any inconvenience caused to patients when we are running behind with our appointments.

Privacy

This practice is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of your personal health information. Your medical record is a confidential document. It is the policy of this practice to maintain security of personal health information at all times and to ensure that this information is only available to authorised members of staff.

Phone calls

You can contact doctors at this practice by telephone during normal surgery hours. A message will be taken if the doctor is with a patient, and your call returned at the earliest opportunity.

Feedback

Please feel free to talk to your doctor or the receptionist about any problems you have with the service we provide.

We believe problems are best dealt with in the practice, and we want to know if you are concerned about any aspect of our service.

However, if you feel there is a problem you wish to take up outside, you may prefer to contact the Healthcare Complaints Commission.
