BACCHUS MARSH MEDICAL CENTRE

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Dr Sumaya ZAZ
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Dr Stephanie WILLIAMS
Dr Palwasha SAREER
Dr Teena JOSEPH
Dr Rebecca WEBSTER
Dr Ferhan MUNEEB
Dr Peter NGUYEN
Dr Harleen AULAKH

STAFF DETAILS

Katie Bielecki (Practice Manager)

Emma Thompson
(Clinical Care Co-ordinator)

RECEPTIONISTS

Amanda, Dana, Eve, Joanne, Karen, Kylie, Laura, Lauren, Naomi, Sandra, Susan, Olivia, Alison, Kasey, Robyn, Georgia and Chelsea

NURSES

Bri, Katie H, Keeley, Kiara, Mark, Tammy, Tiana and Manpreet

CONSULTATION TIMES

Monday to Friday	8 am – 6 pm
Saturday	8 am – 5 pm
Sunday & Public Holidays	9 am – 1 pm

DARLEY MEDICAL CENTRE

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HOURS

Monday to Friday	8.30 am – 5 pm

MADDINGLEY MEDICAL CENTRE

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HOURS

Monday to Friday	8am – 6pm
Saturday	8am – 5pm
Sunday & Public Holidays	9am – 1pm

YOUR DOCTOR

APRIL 2026

MANAGING CHOLESTEROL

THE FIBRE FACTOR

ORAL HEALTH & IMMUNITY

ALCOHOL AND CANCER

Compliments of your GP

Small moves, big health benefits!

For many of us, a typical day might involve sitting in the car, sitting at work, and then again at home to relax. Even if you do regular structured exercise, long periods of inactivity (being sedentary) can still affect your health.

Humans were built to move. In the past, daily life involved walking, lifting, and physical work. Today, many adults spend nine to eleven hours a day sitting, which can cause our bodies to slowly lose strength and function.

Posture and discomfort

Sitting can make your hip muscles shorten and pull on your lower back. Over time, this can affect posture and place strain on your spine, discs and joints. It's common to notice back, neck, or shoulder pain, stiffness, and weaker muscles.

However, it's not just muscles and joints that are affected. Over time, lack of activity can also take a toll on metabolic health.

Moving for metabolic health

Metabolism is how your body produces and uses energy while keeping blood sugar, fats, and blood pressure in balance. A sedentary lifestyle can make these processes less efficient, causing gradual changes which often occur without obvious symptoms at first.

Low levels of physical activity can affect blood vessel health, making arteries less flexible over time. This can place extra strain on your heart and increase the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Inactivity can also reduce how effectively your body responds to insulin, making it harder to keep blood sugar levels steady. Over time, this can increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

Long periods of inactivity have also been associated with a higher risk of some cancers, although the reasons for this link are still being researched.

Small changes, big impact

The encouraging news is that you don't need to overhaul your life or run a marathon to reduce these risks. Structured exercise is still important, but regular daily movement adds up and is essential in keeping many body systems working well and protecting your health.

Breaking up sitting time is the key. Aim to stand and move for a few minutes every 20–30 minutes. This might be a short walk, gentle stretching, or simply standing while on the phone.

- Alternate sitting and standing throughout the day, for example with a sit-stand desk.
- Take the stairs whenever possible.
- Park further from work or shops, or walk part of your commute.
- Use a smart device to track activity and set reminders to move.
- Take a short walk after dinner to aid digestion and reduce tiredness.
- Keep an activity diary or keep exercise gear handy as a reminder.

It's easier than you might think!

Regular movement can improve your posture, ease muscle and joint tension, and even reduce the risk of long-term disease. It's one of the simplest ways to support a longer, healthier life.

After sitting for a while, notice how your body feels when you stand up. Signs like stiffness can be a reminder to move more often!

Our newsletter is free - please take a copy with you

Fibre: the unsung hero of good health

When we talk about healthy eating, fibre doesn't always get the spotlight — yet it's essential for good health. Despite its benefits, many Australians don't eat enough of this nutrient.

What exactly is fibre?

Fibre is the part of plant foods that your body can't fully digest or absorb. It travels through your digestive system, helping everything work more efficiently.

You can get plenty of fibre from everyday foods. Try fruit and vegetables (especially with skins), wholegrains, or legumes like peas, beans, and lentils. Nuts, seeds, and soy products such as edamame and tofu are also good sources.

Why fibre matters

Getting enough fibre:

- Keeps your bowels regular
- Supports heart health by lowering LDL ("bad") cholesterol
- Slows the rise of blood sugar after eating
- Helps you feel full, supporting a healthy weight

Diets low in fibre are linked with a higher risk of constipation and other bowel problems, and may increase the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain bowel conditions.

How much do we need?

Most adults need around 25–30 grams of fibre a day, but many Australians don't eat enough vegetables, legumes, and wholegrain cereals to reach the recommended amount. Instead, highly refined or processed foods – which contain little fibre – are often preferred. This may be due to convenience, or lack of time to prepare fresh foods.

Easy ways to add more fibre

You don't need to overhaul your diet. Small, realistic changes can make a difference:

- Add vegetables to every meal.
- Choose wholegrains such as oats, wholemeal bread, and brown rice.
- Snack on fruit or nuts and seeds instead of sugary options.
- Try legumes or soy products a few times a week.

If you're increasing fibre, do it gradually and drink enough water to avoid bloating or discomfort.

A quick word on supplements

Fibre supplements can help in some situations, depending on your health, but food is usually the best source. Whole foods provide a mix of fibre, plus vitamins and minerals that supplements can't fully replace.

Fibre isn't about trends or strict rules – it's about everyday choices that support your health over time. If you experience ongoing bowel changes, constipation, or other gut symptoms, your GP can recommend the most appropriate steps.

Eating foods high in fibre can be an easy daily habit that adds up to big long-term benefits.

Test your health knowledge

Think you know the basics of staying healthy? From movement and nutrition to oral care and immunity, our bodies rely on many small habits to stay strong. See how much you know by filling in the blanks.

1. Over time, lack of activity can also take a toll on _____ health.
2. Inactivity can reduce how effectively your body responds to _____, making blood sugar harder to manage.
3. LDL is often referred to as 'bad' cholesterol because it can build up in _____.
4. HDL is known as 'good' cholesterol because it helps remove excess cholesterol from your _____.
5. Fibre is the part of plant foods that your body can't fully _____ or absorb.
6. Most adults need around 25–30 grams of _____ a day, but many don't reach that.
7. Neglecting your teeth and gums allows harmful _____ to multiply.
8. Brushing, flossing, and regular dental check-ups protect your teeth, gums, and _____.
9. Alcohol contains ethanol, which your body breaks down into _____ that can damage DNA.
10. Alcohol is classified as a _____, meaning it's a substance known to cause cancer in humans.

Hint: Clues can be found in the articles in this newsletter (and answers are on the back page)

Winter immunity starts in your mouth

When the weather gets cooler, we naturally start thinking about boosting our immunity – especially when someone nearby is coughing and sneezing! We know diet and exercise matter, but there are some lesser-known habits that also support your body's defences. One of these is your oral health.

Why oral health matters

Your mouth is home to trillions of different bacteria. Most are harmless, and some even help digestion, but neglecting your teeth and gums allows harmful bacteria to multiply. This can cause gum inflammation and infections. Beyond causing discomfort or tooth problems, gum inflammation may affect your whole body by making it harder for your immune system to fight infections.

Keeping your gums and teeth healthy supports your body's ability to respond to infection and stay strong.

Tips to keep your mouth in top shape:

- Brush twice a day with flouride toothpaste, and also brush gently along your gum line.
- Floss daily to remove plaque and food particles that brushing can't reach.
- Visit your dentist regularly for check-ups and professional cleanings.
- Address problems promptly – even minor oral infections can affect your immunity.
- Manage lifestyle factors: avoid smoking, limit sugary foods and drinks, and drink plenty of water.

Extra ways to support immunity

Sleep, stress management, and balanced nutrition all influence oral health and immune function. Poor sleep can affect your body's ability to fight infections and may even worsen gum inflammation, while chronic stress can impact both your mouth health and your immunity.

Getting enough rest, reducing stress, and eating a variety of nutrient-rich foods can help keep your mouth – and your body – healthy.

Small daily steps, big impact

Brushing, flossing, and regular dental check-ups are consistent habits that protect your teeth, gums, and immune system. During the colder months, these little steps go a long way in keeping your body strong and ready to fend off winter bugs.

The alcohol-cancer connection

Many people enjoy a glass of wine or beer, but it's important to know that alcohol can increase the chance of developing certain types of cancer – even at low levels.

Why alcohol matters

Alcohol contains a chemical called ethanol. When your body breaks it down, it forms another chemical called acetaldehyde, which can damage cells and DNA. Alcohol is classified as a carcinogen – meaning a substance known to cause cancer in humans.

Alcohol can also reduce your body's ability to use nutrients that help protect against cancer, such as the beneficial compounds found in many fruits and vegetables.

Which cancers are linked to alcohol?

Alcohol is known to increase the risk of some cancers, including breast, bowel (colorectal), mouth, throat (pharynx), voice box (larynx), oesophagus and liver. There's also evidence that alcohol may contribute to other cancers, although the link is less clear.

What you can do

There is no safe level of alcohol when it comes to cancer, but even small changes can help protect your health. Start by gradually reducing how much you drink – even a little less each week can make a difference:

- **Include alcohol-free days:** don't drink every day to give your body a break.
- **Replace drinks:** choose water or non-alcoholic alternatives.
- **Watch serving sizes:** measure your drink, use smaller glasses, or add ice.
- **Plan social occasions:** alternate alcoholic drinks with water, drink slowly, and don't feel pressured to 'keep up'.
- **Track your intake**: keeping a diary can help you see patterns and stay within your limits.
- **Know your limits:** check trusted sources for recommended alcohol limits.

Replacing drinking with an enjoyable activity can help form healthier habits. Try exercise, reading, hobbies, spending time with friends – anything that doesn't involve alcohol.

If alcohol is a part of your routine, it's worth discussing this with your GP. Even making small changes can help support your health now and in the future.

Baked Lentil Cottage Pie

A hearty, vegetarian twist on the classic cottage pie, packed with lentils, mushrooms, and greens.
(Serves 4)

INGREDIENTS

Filling:

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 2 carrots, grated
- 1 celery stalk, diced
- 150 g mushrooms, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 400g can cooked brown lentils (drained)
- 400g can tomatoes (crushed or diced)
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 cup finely chopped broccoli or spinach

Topping:

- 700g potatoes (about 4 medium), peeled and chopped
- ¼–½ cup milk or light sour cream
- 1–2 tsp olive oil

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Boil potatoes until soft. Mash with milk/ sour cream and olive oil.
2. Heat oil in a pan. Cook onion, carrot, and celery until soft.
3. Add garlic, lentils, tomatoes, tomato paste, thyme, salt, and pepper. Simmer 10 minutes.
4. Stir in broccoli or spinach. Spoon filling into a baking dish.
5. Spread mashed potato on top, roughen with a fork.
6. Bake at 180°C for 30 minutes, until golden on the top.

Tip: A drizzle of olive oil or a light sprinkle of cheese helps the topping brown nicely.

Take control of your cholesterol

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance found in every cell of your body. It helps make hormones, vitamin D and bile acids, which help digest fats. Although cholesterol is essential for your body, high levels can raise your risk of heart disease and stroke.

What do LDL and HDL mean?

Cholesterol travels through your blood attached to proteins called lipoproteins. The two main types are LDL (low-density lipoprotein) and HDL (high-density lipoprotein).

LDL is often referred to as 'bad' cholesterol because it can build up in the walls of arteries, forming fatty deposits that narrow or block blood vessels. Over time, this can strain your heart and blood vessels.

HDL is known as 'good' cholesterol because it helps remove excess cholesterol from your blood and carries it to your liver, where it can be removed from your body.

Why testing matters

High cholesterol usually has no warning signs, so many people are unaware their levels are raised. This is why blood tests are important – because they can identify high cholesterol early, before damage to blood vessels occurs.

Cholesterol blood tests

A simple blood test can check your cholesterol levels. Your doctor can explain the results based on your overall health and risk factors, and advise how often testing is recommended.

Cholesterol tests usually also measure triglycerides, another type of fat in your blood. Triglycerides store unused energy from food, and levels can rise with diets high in sugar or alcohol, being overweight, or certain health conditions. High levels can also increase the risk of heart disease.

Preventing and managing high cholesterol

Practical lifestyle steps that can help prevent or manage high cholesterol and support heart health, including:

- Eating a healthy diet low in saturated and trans fats and high in fibre
- Being physically active most days
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Not smoking
- Reducing alcohol intake

For some people, lifestyle changes alone may not be enough. In these cases, medication may be recommended after discussion with your doctor. Medication works best when combined with healthy lifestyle habits.

Looking after your heart health

Knowing your risk factors, attending regular screening, and making healthy choices part of your daily routine can help reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.

Understanding how cholesterol works in your body and keeping it at healthy levels can help protect your heart health for years to come.

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:

Puzzle answers:

1. Metabolic
2. Insulin
3. Arteries
4. Blood
5. Digest
6. Fibre
7. Bacteria
8. Immunity
9. Acetaldehyde
10. Carcinogen

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.

PRACTICE INFORMATION

GENERAL CONSULTATION POLICIES

Longer consultation times are available, so please ask our receptionists if you require some extra time

HOME VISITS

Home and other visits are available for regular patients of this practice whose condition prevents them from attending the surgery

AFTER HOURS

If you get sick at night or on the weekend, please ring 5367 3333 for advice. We look after our patients 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

APPOINTMENTS

Please ring 5367 3333 for an appointment. Patients attending without a booking will be fitted in at the earliest available time.

Emergencies will always be seen quickly – simply notify the receptionist

PHONE CALLS

Your regular doctor may arrange to phone you under particular circumstances. Unfortunately we are not able to connect telephone calls to our doctors routinely, as the interruption caused to the patients they are seeing can be harmful. Our staff will usually be able to pass on a message to your doctor.

FEES

Fees are payable at the time of consultation by cash, cheque, Mastercard or Visa. The GPs at this practice bulk bill most consults. Veterans may sign the service voucher.

An increased fee applies on Sundays and public holidays.

From March 1st 2023 a non-attendance fee will be charged for appointments that are not cancelled with at least 2 hours notice.

SMOKING POLICY

This practice has a no smoking policy.

SERVICES AVAILABLE

- General family medicine
- Check-ups, medical examinations
- Family planning
- Cervical screening tests, pregnancy tests
- Antenatal care, obstetrics
- ECG, heart check
- Counselling
- Vaccination: children and travel
- Blood tests / pathology
- Minor surgery: stitching cuts, removing moles, skin cancers
- Liquid nitrogen (freezing) therapy for sunspots and warts
- Acupuncture
- Weight control, nutrition advice
- Treatment of fractures
- Ear wax removal