



DECEMBER 2023 - JANUARY 2024 EDITION

FREE TO TAKE HOME!



Child obesity



Hearing loss in adults



Deep Vein Thrombosis



YOUR NEXT APPOINTMENT:

#### ENJOY THIS FREE NEWSLETTER

Please remember that decisions about medical care should be made in consultation with your health care provider so discuss with your doctor before acting on any of the information.  
[www.healthnews.net.au](http://www.healthnews.net.au)



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#### ● PRACTICE DOCTORS

Dr Marc Herington

Dr Kirsten Scott

Dr Damien Polioudakis

Dr Bree Latta

Dr Leah Spencer Watts

Dr Christopher Kearney

Dr Gillian Porter

Dr Timothy Johnston

Dr Eugenie Prior

Dr Pavani Kurra

Dr. Anna Braun

#### ● REGISTERED PRACTICE NURSE

Lorianna Marchese

Sue Johnstone

#### ● ON SITE PROFESSIONALS

Loretta Egan .....Podiatrist

Jennifer Donnelly .....Dietitian

#### ● OTHER SERVICES

Dorevitch Pathology

Monday – Friday.....8am – 4.00pm

(No appointment required)

#### ● SURGERY HOURS

Monday – Friday

8am – 6pm

(by appointment)

Saturday

9am – 12 midday

(by appointment)

#### ● AFTER HOURS & EMERGENCY

If you require medical attention outside of normal surgery hours, Victoria Harbour Medical Centre provides out-of-hours care via Doctor Doctor. They can be contacted on:

**132 660** or call **9629 1414** for a recorded message.

If an extreme emergency dial : **000**

(triple zero)



Please see the Rear Cover for more practice information.

#### ● BILLING ARRANGEMENTS

Fees are payable at the time of consultation by cash, credit card or direct deposit. The AMA fee structure forms the basis of our billing policy and is displayed in the reception area of the practice. Repatriation patients will be bulk billed.

#### ● RECALL SYSTEM

Our practice uses a secure mobile phone messaging service via HealthEngine recalls. Instead of receiving a letter in the mail, you will receive a SMS recall or reminder notification on your mobile device. Please contact the practice for more information.

#### ● APPOINTMENTS

We run by appointments, but emergencies will always be given priority. We request on arrival to the practice you see reception to check in. If you have a complex issue or are new to the practice, please request a double appointment. Unfortunately, at times your doctor may be delayed due to an emergency or a complicated medical issue. We acknowledge your time is valuable and always endeavour to minimise waiting times.

#### ● ON-LINE APPOINTMENT BOOKING

For existing and new patients our practice offers on-line appointments. *This service is available via our website, app and HealthEngine.*

#### ● HOME VISITS

Victoria Harbour Medical Centre home visits can be arranged within normal opening hours if a patient is too ill to attend the Medical Centre and where it is safe and reasonable. The patient must be a regular patient of the practice and live within a 5km radius of the practice.

All home visits will only be booked at the discretion of the doctor, whose decision will be final.

#### ● TELEPHONE AND ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

Doctors in this practice may be contacted during normal surgery hours. If the doctor is with a patient, a message will be taken. Your call will always be put through in the event of an emergency. Communication via email is kept to a minimal and is conducted with appropriate regard to the privacy and confidentiality of the patient's health information.

#### ● PATHOLOGY TESTS AND INVESTIGATIONS

Test results are generally available within 2-3 days of the test being performed. Some blood tests can take considerably longer. Results are downloaded electronically to our doctors by our preferred pathology and imaging providers. Attending other pathology or imaging providers can cause further delays.

Urgent results will be notified to you by your doctor as soon as possible. Other results are available by arrangement with the ordering doctor. Each of our doctors have their own preferred methods for notifying results. If you urgently require results it is advised to make an appointment with the ordering doctor.

#### ● PATIENT FEEDBACK

Your satisfaction is important to us. If you feel you have an idea of areas where we can improve, please complete our patient feedback form and place it in the suggestion box which is located at reception. If you have a complaint, please discuss this with your Doctor or Practice Manager. If your complaint was not resolved please take the matter to the Health Complaints Commissioner: Phone: 1300 582 113 or email: [hsc@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:hsc@health.vic.gov.au)

# Child and adolescent obesity

We tend to think that only America has issues with weight. The reality is that one in four Australian children are overweight or obese. This is a significant increase in one generation. Why? Firstly, children tend to snack on high-calorie foods and drinks, and second, is replacing physical activity with time on screens. We can't turn back time, but it is not all bad news. There is much you can do as a parent or guardian to help a child get and maintain a healthy weight.

Substitute water for sweet drinks. Eliminating liquid calories reduces calorie intake without leaving a child hungry. Allow soft drinks only on special occasions or no more than once a week. Replace fruit juice with a piece of fruit and a glass of water. This gives them more fibre and fewer calories.

Research shows that we eat more when distracted, so ban the screen while eating. It has also been shown that children who eat at the table with others are 40% less likely to be overweight. This is partly the "screen effect"

mentioned before, but it also means the child is likelier to eat a proper meal instead of snack foods.

Teach your children about cooking. Children who get active in the kitchen will eat less junk food and learn about healthy eating.

Limit screen time and get your child active. This can be in an organised sport or a play in the park or back yard. Get a ball or Frisbee and join in, as exercise is good for parents too.

Good habits from childhood will serve your child well in adult life.



# Hearing loss in adults

As we get older, our senses are less acute. It is estimated that over half of Australians aged between 60 and 70 have some hearing loss, increasing to 80% in those aged over 80. Severity, of course, varies. Hearing loss can be sensorineural (affecting the cochlea and/or nerve), conductive (blockage in the middle ear), or mixed. Generally, age-related loss is sensorineural. Additional risk factors include noise exposure, genetics, ear trauma and chemical exposure.

As we age, the hair cells in the inner ear become damaged and less effective. This cannot be reversed. Typical symptoms are difficulty hearing voices. This usually starts with picking up speech in a crowded room or when background noise (e.g. television) is on. Sometimes, those around the individual notice it first.

Hearing loss can be isolating as many feel (incorrectly) embarrassed about asking for words to be repeated. Collectively, we tend to be less accepting of hearing loss than visual loss and the need for glasses. There is no valid reason for this.

Hearing can be assessed by an audiologist. Depending on circumstances, you may need a referral from your GP. There are no other specific tests required. Treatment is the use of a hearing aid. Modern ones are far smaller and less noticeable. When is a hearing aid needed? That depends on the individual and how much their hearing loss affects them and those around them. Chat with your GP about any concerns you have with your hearing.



More info »





# Deep Vein Thrombosis

A thrombus is a blood clot. The ability of the body to form clots is critical as this stops bleeding when we cut ourselves. However, a blood clot forming in a blood vessel can cause serious problems.

A deep vein thrombosis (DVT) occurs when a blood clot forms in the deep veins in the calf. Risk factors include smoking, family history, being overweight, prolonged sitting (e.g. plane travel), and surgical procedures. Some people may have a genetic predisposition, and there may be no predisposing or risk factors.

Typical symptoms are pain and swelling in the calf. It may be hot or red. There may be pain in flexing the ankles. Diagnosis may be apparent by history and examination. However, a Doppler study will usually be ordered to confirm a diagnosis and reveal the extent of the thrombus.

Treatment is with anticoagulant medication. This does not remove the existing clot but reduces the risk of it extending or spreading. The length of time of treatment depends on individual circumstances.

The main complication of a DVT is spread to the lungs- pulmonary embolism (PE). This is a serious condition generally needing hospitalisation.

Reduce your risk by maintaining a healthy weight and not smoking. Other preventative measures depend on the circumstances. For example, you may be advised to take anticoagulant medication before an operation, together with compression stockings. When flying, stretch your legs frequently and try to avoid crossing them. Taking aspirin has not been shown to reduce the risk of DVT.



# Eczema - Prevention and treatment

Eczema is a red, itchy rash often starting in infancy or early childhood. The most typical places are the face, neck and "flexures", which are the skin creases at the knees and elbows. It can be a few scattered areas or may be widespread. It ranges from the mild to the severe and may weep or be crusty.

The mainstays of treatment are moisturisers and steroid-based creams. Avoiding known triggers can reduce the frequency and severity of episodes. Unfortunately, it is not always possible. Dust mite allergy can worsen existing eczema. Contact occurs via bedding, carpet or soft furnishings. Shake sheets daily to remove skin scales (the food of dust mites!). Change sheets twice a week after a hot water wash. Put a special dust mite cover on the mattress.

Soaps and detergents remove natural skin oils and worsen dryness and itch. Wash with aqueous cream. Showers are better than baths. Reverse dry skin by frequent application of a simple moisturiser. Avoid wool and synthetic fabrics and wear cotton. Both cold and heat can worsen itch.

Both natural foods and food additives can worsen eczema in some children. Unfortunately, skin or blood testing for food allergies is inaccurate in uncovering which foods. Instead, strict avoidance of food (two to three weeks) followed by a deliberate challenge with the food (three servings a day for four days) will usually highlight any food allergies. Common ones are dairy, soy, fish, eggs, wheat, citrus, yeast extract or nuts.



# Stingers in the water

While shark attacks make headlines, other creatures in the water can cause problems when swimming. These are many and varied and influenced by season and where on the coastline you are. Most jellyfish stings are not serious but can be itchy or painful. However, tropical marine stingers found across Northern Australia, down to around Bundaberg in Queensland and Broome in Western Australia, can cause serious reactions and even be fatal.

There are ways to minimise the chances of getting stung. Always swim between the red and yellow flags inside stinger nets (where provided). Don't enter the water when beaches are closed. Look for and obey safety signs. Don't enter the water if the beach is closed. Wear a protective lycra suit, especially in the stinger season (usually November to March).

If a person is stung by a marine stinger, they will need first aid. Apply vinegar to the sting area. Call for the lifeguard and seek urgent medical attention. Stings by less toxic jellyfish can be treated firstly by removing the sting. You can use simple analgesia for pain, antihistamines for itching and soothing creams.





## HEALTHY SMOOTHIES FOR KIDS

Smoothies are a great way to add fruit and vegetables to your child's diet. This is especially the case for fussy eaters. In addition to this, healthy ingredients like ginger, chia seeds and kale are difficult to incorporate into your child's diet.

Some of the healthiest things to add in a kids smoothie include Protein, such as a commercial protein powder, Greek yogurt (which is higher in protein than regular yogurt) or nut butters. Fruit, including berries, mango, bananas and avocado. Greens, such as spinach or kale. A liquid base such as dairy or plant-based milk, water or fruit juice.

### Healthy Berry Smoothie:

The raw cauliflower will blend up into a creamy texture and will be unnoticed by your children.

- Frozen Mixed Berries
- Frozen Banana
- Raw Cauliflower
- Choice of Milk or Non-Dairy Milk
- Chia Seeds

### Healthy Green Smoothie:

The avocado provides a nice thick creamy texture to the smoothie eliminating the need for milk or yoghurts.

- Avocado
- Green Spinach or Kale
- Frozen Banana
- Cucumber
- Honey
- Coconut Water

## MERRY CHRISTMAS



### • SPECIAL PRACTICE NOTES

Victoria Harbour Medical Centre is located at 850 Collins Street with the main entrance via Merchant Street next to Victoria Harbour Pharmacy and opposite Woolworths. Providing a full range of General Practice services, Victoria Harbour Medical Centre is committed to quality and friendly medical care. Victoria Harbour Medical Centre offers a range of services to our wider community including:

- General Medicine
- Women's Health
- Men's Health
- Chronic Disease Management
- Mental Health
- Minor Surgery
- Travel Medicine
- Sexual Health.

Our doctors are fully qualified Gps and fellows of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. The practice also serves an important teaching function, as a placement for Registrars in their final year of Specialists and General Practice training.

### • ANTENATAL SHARED CARE

**Dr Kirsten Scott, Dr Gillian Porter, Dr Eugene Prior & Dr Bree Latta** are accredited Maternity Care Affiliates who work in collaboration with The Royal women's Hospital for Antenatal Shared Care.

For more information on this service, please visit our website or contact the practice.

### • PRACTICE PRIVACY POLICY

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 staff.



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Accredited**

Our commitment to  
your safety and care