



**SOUTH WANGARATTA  
MEDICAL CENTRE**

## 45-49 year old NEWSLETTER



### **Happy 45th Birthday from South Wangaratta Medical Centre!**

We'd like to take a moment to wish you a very happy 45th birthday from all of us here at South Wangaratta Medical Centre. Thank you for letting us be part of your journey—we're grateful to support your health and wellbeing, and we look forward to continuing to be there for you in the years ahead.

Turning 45 is an exciting and busy time in life. You might be juggling work, family, hobbies, and other commitments, and it's easy to let your own health take a back seat (don't worry, we've all been there!). But when we neglect our health, small issues can sometimes creep in unnoticed and grow into bigger problems.

No matter where you're at with your health right now, we're here to help you stay on track and support you for the future. In this newsletter, you'll find plenty of tips to keep you feeling your best so you can continue doing the things that bring you joy and fulfillment. We'll also highlight some health assessments you can access through your GP and their team—these are fully subsidised by Medicare and completely FREE if you have an Australian Medicare card.

At 45, you're in a prime position to make healthy choices and address any risk factors that could lead to chronic health conditions down the track. Left unchecked, these issues can have a big impact on your quality of life, especially as you get older. But the good news is, there are plenty of preventative steps and health checks we can do together to help you stay in great shape.

If it's been a while since you've seen your GP (or if you don't have a regular one), now's the perfect time to check in. Below, we've included some key health reminders and checks to help you cover all your bases and keep your health in top form.

Here's to a happy, healthy year ahead!

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## Preventative Health Checks

### Blood tests and allied health checks

#### Every 1-2 years

- Dental check
- Optometrist/eye check
- Blood pressure check
- Heart disease risk assessment
- Mammogram (for women after the age of 50)
- Bowel screening test (after the age of 45)

#### Every 3 years

- Blood glucose (sugars) test

#### Every 5 years

- Cholesterol and lipids check
- Cervical screening test (women)

\* Some individuals may be at higher risk of certain conditions so will have the above mentioned checks more frequently



# Chronic Disease

Chronic disease refers to any long-term health condition that lasts for more than six months. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, the top 10 most common chronic health conditions in Australia include conditions like arthritis, asthma, back pain, cancer, heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), diabetes, chronic kidney disease, mental health conditions, and osteoporosis.

These conditions have a significant impact on Australians, accounting for around 90% of deaths and a third of all hospitalisations. In fact, half of all Australians live with at least one chronic condition, and 25% manage two or more.

But it's not all bad news! The good thing is that many chronic diseases can be prevented or managed with the right lifestyle changes and support. The first step is understanding what increases your risk of developing these conditions—these are known as *risk factors*.

In the next section, we'll explore some of the key risk factors and how you can take steps to reduce them, helping you stay healthier for longer.

## Risk factors for developing a chronic disease

Some risk factors are changeable, while others cannot be changed (genetics etc.). These are called modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors.



**Family history** - chronic diseases (diabetes, heart conditions, osteoporosis etc.) experienced by your parents and siblings may place you at a higher risk of developing the same condition.

**Biomedical factors** - high blood pressure, high cholesterol, overweight, obesity etc. are all factors that can increase your risk of developing chronic diseases

**Lifestyle** - smoking, drinking excessive alcohol, poor diet or sedentary lifestyle all increase the risk of chronic disease development.

# Modifiable Risk Factors

Modifiable risk factors are behaviours that when changed can lead to health improvements and prevent future disease development. The four main modifiable risk factors are; **smoking**, **nutrition**, **alcohol** and **physical activity** (which we commonly refer to as SNAP).

## Smoking



Smoking is the top most preventable cause of illness and death in Australia. While smoking rates have declined over the last 30 years, people in their 40's, 50's and 60's have not reduced cigarettes as much as other age groups in recent times.

Tobacco smoke contains thousands of chemicals of which almost 100 can cause cancer. Second hand smoke can also cause ill health to others, including adults and children.

The amazing thing about smoking cessation is the health benefits of quitting begin almost straight away! Quitting smoking is hard. The body is dependent on nicotine and there are often many barriers to stopping. However there are multiple ways to quit smoking and different paths will work for different people. Most try multiple times before they are successful.

Want to quit? Here are some steps that will help you get there - or talk to your nurse, pharmacist or GP today for extra help.

- [Why quit smoking?](#)
- [What quitting feels like](#)
- [Know your triggers](#)
- [Quitting methods](#)
- [Write down your quite plan](#)
- [Coping with quitting and staying smoke-free](#)

Call QUITline for extra **FREE** help - **13 78 48**



## Nutrition: The Impact of Diet on Health

According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), dietary risks remain a significant contributor to the burden of disease in Australia. Poor diets are linked to 62% of the heart disease burden, 41% of type 2 diabetes burden, 34% of stroke burden, and 22% of bowel cancer burden. Additionally, dietary risks are the third leading contributor to ill health and premature deaths in Australia, following tobacco use and obesity.

Recent trends show that most Australians still fail to meet healthy eating guidelines. Only about half of adults consume the recommended daily servings of fruit, and the vast majority fall short of the recommended 5–6 servings of vegetables per day. At the same time, the consumption of discretionary foods—those high in sugar, salt, and saturated fats—continues to rise, further increasing the risk of chronic diseases like obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular conditions.

**Australians need to eat more:** Vegetables, Legumes/beans, whole grain cereal, Dairy - reduced fat milk, yoghurt, cheese, fish, seafood, poultry, eggs, nuts, seeds.

**Australians need to eat less:** Starchy vegetables, refined cereals, medium and high fat dairy foods, red meat (males only), saturated fat food and drinks (chips etc.), added sugar food and drinks (soft drink, cake, biscuits etc.), added salt food and drink.

For more information visit <https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/> or speak to your practice nurse, GP or pharmacist today.





## Alcohol

Drinking large amounts of alcohol plays a significant role in causing chronic disease in Australia. It can be difficult to recognise when you are drinking too much, especially if those around you are also drinking regularly. Alcoholic drinks vary in size and strength which makes it difficult to recognise how much you've drunk and knowing when to stop.



If you would like to find out how many typical standard drinks you consume, try this calculator at:

<https://drinkwise.org.au/standard-drinks-calculator/#>

Australian guidelines recommend healthy men and women should drink no more than 10 standard drinks per week and no more than 4 standard drinks on one day. The less you drink, the lower your risk of alcohol related injury.

Are you unsure if you have a drinking problem? The following are signs and symptoms that may indicate you have a problem:

- You are drinking more than the Australian Guideline recommendations
- You or others are worried about how much you drink
- You need to drink more to feel the same effects
- You crave alcohol
- Alcohol is affecting your physical or mental health
- You don't feel in control of your drinking
- Your drinking is interfering with your relationships or job
- You experience physical symptoms such as shaking, sweating, anxiety or vomiting when you don't have a drink

Want to know how to drink less?

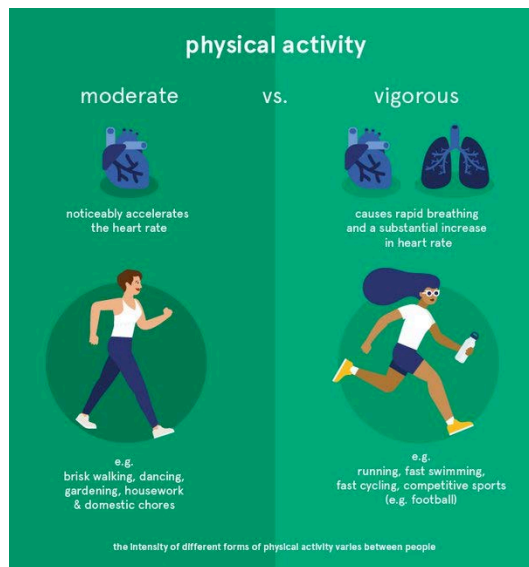
- Drink water (or non-alcoholic beverages) instead
- Avoid drinking in rounds
- Order smaller serves of alcohol
- Don't let others top up your glass
- Avoid high alcohol content drinks like spirits
- Eat food before and during drinking to help with alcohol absorption and to slow down process
- Distract yourself with activities while drinking eg. playing pool, darts, singing etc.



## Physical activity

Regular movement is not just important for your physical health, but for your mental health as well. There is strong evidence that some physical exercise is better than none, and increasing the amount you do every day will have even greater health benefits.

Physical activity is important at every age, regardless of past activity/inactivity. The health benefits include; prevention and management of health conditions, wellbeing improvement, lowering blood pressure, bone/muscle strengthening, socialisation and assisting with weight management.



Physical Activity Guidelines suggest a minimum of:

- Activity on most, if not all, days of the week
- Complete 2.5-5 hours of exercise of moderate intensity a week (half to an hour daily)
- PLUS 1-2 hours of vigorous intensity physical activity
- Muscle strengthening exercises on at least 2 days of the week

What else can you do?

- Take the stairs instead of the lift
- Stand up on public transport
- Get off a stop early and walk to your destination
- Sit less/stand more
- Catch up with family and friends for a walk rather than sitting down
- Get up from your desk to talk to your colleague rather than emailing or calling
- Move more

## Free Health Assessment

### 45-49 year old health assessment (ONCE OFF)

You may be eligible to receive a comprehensive health care check if you are between the ages of 45-49 (for individuals at risk of developing chronic disease) and hold an Australian Medicare Card. This can help support and manage your health going into the future.

During (or prior to) this assessment you may be asked to perform pathology to check cholesterol and blood glucose levels. At the appointment you will then undergo a cardiovascular disease risk assessment, a diabetes risk assessment, a SNAP risk assessment and receive lifestyle intervention advice.



# Free Chronic Condition Management Plan (Care Plan)

If you are diagnosed with a chronic disease/condition and hold an Australian Medicare Card, you are eligible for a Chronic Condition Management Plan (also known as a CCMP or Care Plan). A CCMP can link you into Allied Health services to help manage/improve your condition, and provide regular reviews with your Nurse and GP to track your progress.

Please feel free to contact South Wangaratta Medical Centre on 03 5713 9299 to arrange a check up or to obtain further advice from your GP.

## What is MyMedicare?



MyMedicare is linking yourself through Medicare, with your regular GP and Practice. When you register in MyMedicare, it will notify your general practice that you have chosen them as your regular care team. Additional funding will be available from the government to help them provide the care you need. It is voluntary and free to register in MyMedicare here - <https://bit.ly/4f3E168>

MyMedicare patients will have access to:

- greater continuity of care with your registered practice, improving health outcomes
- longer Medicare Benefit Scheme (MBS) funded telehealth consultations with your GP
- triple bulk billing incentive for longer MBS telehealth consultations for children under 16, pensioners, and concession card holders, from 1 November 2023
- connections to more appropriate care in general practice for people who visit hospital frequently, from mid-2024.

As part of your MyMedicare registration, your chosen practice and GP will appear on your My Health Record. This will make sure all health professionals you see – for example, at a public hospital – will know who to talk to about your regular care.



Please contact our team at South Wangaratta Medical Centre if you have any questions about the information supplied in this newsletter.

PH: 03 5713 9299 E: [southwangarattamc@gmail.com](mailto:southwangarattamc@gmail.com)

47-51 Joyce Way, Wangaratta Vic 3677