



SOUTH WANGARATTA
MEDICAL CENTRE

75 PLUS NEWSLETTER

Healthy living edition



Happy Birthday!

We would like to wish you a happy 75th birthday from everyone here at South Wangaratta Medical Centre. Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your life, and we hope to continue being there when you need us in your future.

Below are some health reminders and checks that you might like to consider to ensure we are covering all bases when it comes to your health needs. This includes; drivers license checks, health assessments, falls prevention, medication reviews, eye checks, home safety, nutrition and hydration, cognitive assessments, and advance care planning.

Annual Drivers License Medical

As you get older, your ability to drive is impacted by multiple factors. Eyesight, hearing, medical conditions, medications, ability to move and reaction times.



In Victoria, you do not need to pass a certain driving test based on age but you will need to understand how aging and health changes can affect your driving, notify VicRoads of any disability or medical changes that can affect your driving and assess your ability to drive regularly.

You can book in with your GP for a medical review to help assess your fitness to drive. This is recommended with any health changes or if you have any concerns.

<https://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/licences/health-and-driving/how-ageing-can-affect-your-driving>

Annual Health Assessment

A **FREE** yearly health assessment is available for everyone aged 75 and over (fully subsidised by Medicare if you hold an Australian Medicare Card). It aims to identify any risk factors that may require further health management. A holistic approach is taken to assess a person's physical, psychological and social functioning.

It is an hour-long appointment shared between the practice nurse and your GP. This allows you to have a longer than normal appointment time with your healthcare team to be able to ask any questions or raise concerns if needed. We also take this opportunity to do baseline checks such as blood pressure, pulse, weight, height, vision and may refer you for more pathology depending on your health and other medical conditions.

The health assessment can also act as a trigger for future referrals eg. MyAgedCare - a commonwealth supported program that aims to keep Australians independent in their own homes for longer.

<https://www.myagedcare.gov.au/about-us>

Preventing Falls

As we get older, there is a greater risk of experiencing trips and falls resulting in injury. This is not always part of 'getting older' and can be a sign of a worsening medical condition or from medications. If a fall were to happen, it is important to discuss this with your doctor as soon as is practical.

Some falls can be so bad that a person may end up in hospital or be the reason for admission into a nursing home, so prevention is key.

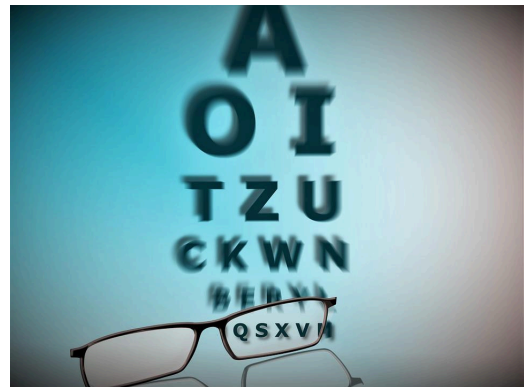
Eye checks, medication reviews, home safety, nutrition, hydration and exercise are all important facets of a falls prevention strategy.

Eye Check

Many eye conditions are more common in older individuals. A healthy lifestyle is often the key to prevention of these problems. Regular visits to your optometrist are recommended to ensure no permanent damage occurs. Early detection often allows for better treatment outcomes.

We recommend seeing your optometrist every 1-2 years, or more frequently if any eye changes occur.

More information can be found at <https://goodvisionforlife.com.au/>



Medication Review

Medications should be reviewed annually, at any age of life. Some medications are known to increase the incidence of falls and fractures so use often needs to be rationalised. Australians who take over four medications are at a higher risk of adverse events and side effects.



Ask your doctor if you qualify for a government funded home visit from an Accredited Pharmacist today to review your medications. This program is **FREE** and is fully subsidised by Medicare.

Home Safety

Almost 50% of falls occur in the home, however there are multiple strategies we can employ to reduce this risk. Be aware of tripping hazards, improve visibility through lighting and fixing rails and grab bars are some useful strategies you can employ. If you would like help to organise your home safely, we may be able to help with referrals to MyAgedCare or other allied health providers who can assist here.

Wet areas, like the bathroom, are a common area for falls to occur. Lighting is important here and non-slip mats may also provide assistance to help reduce the risk.



Depending on your living situation, you may also be eligible to receive assistance in obtaining a funded **Personal Alert**. A personal alert for elderly, frail individuals provides daily monitoring and emergency assistance via a wrist or neck pendant.

More information can be found here:

<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/supporting-independent-living/how-personal-alert-victoria-works>

Alternatives to Personal Alert:

<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/supporting-independent-living/alternatives-to-personal-alert-victoria>

Nutrition & hydration

Eating well is an important step in reducing your risk of falls. Healthy eating with enough energy and protein helps maintain muscle mass and strength. Inadequate food intake can lead to falls due to increased frailty, muscle mass loss, unsteadiness, weakness and dizziness. Older people often lose weight as they age, but it is not always normal.

Weight loss can be a sign of disease and can lead to an increased chance of fractures and falls.

There are also special diets for some chronic diseases eg. high blood pressure, high cholesterol or diabetes, which can place these individuals at an increased risk of falls.

Older people also often find it difficult to recognise the signs of dehydration, which can increase the risk of falls.

Adequate hydration is important at every stage of life. Fluid is not just water, it includes tea, coffee, milk, ice blocks, juice, hot chocolate, ice cream, cordial, custard and soup. Regular sips of fluid throughout the day is encouraged.



Exercise

Exercise is important for anyone of any age, however as you age you are more at risk for medical conditions that can be prevented by regular physical activity. Some of the medical conditions that can be reduced or prevented by even a small increase in your daily activity include; obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, osteoporosis and some cancers.

The majority of people when they age experience a loss in bone density and muscle mass. Some physical activities such as stretching and resistance training can slow down the rate of this occurring. Exercise also has many other health benefits such as improving your mood, sleep, increasing your energy level, and also decreases stress and pain levels.

<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/physical-activity-guidelines-for-older-adults>

Cognitive Health

When you read a book, boil the kettle or use a computer, you are using your cognitive abilities. These are the mental skills needed to carry out all simple and complex tasks. As we age, some of the cognitive abilities we depend on decline slightly. While a certain amount is normal, some people will experience severe decline in their cognitive skills leading to dementia. Your GP team can screen this in a government funded health assessment, which is **FREE** and available on a yearly basis after the age of 75 if you hold an Australian Medicare Card. Feel free to call the reception team at South Wangaratta Medical Centre to book in today.



<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/cognitive-health-and-older-adults#risks>

Advance Care Planning

There are a number of legal documents to consider as you age. Most people have organised a Will by your age, but consideration may be needed for an **Enduring Power of Attorney**. There are two types of EPOA's; financial and medical. These only come into play if you are deemed at a point in time as not having the capacity to make decisions for yourself.

Advance care planning may also need to be considered. This helps the people close to you know what is important to you about the level of healthcare and quality of life you would want if, for some reason, you are unable to participate in the discussions. In an advance care directive, you can document your wishes for future medical care. Advance care directives are *legally recognised documents* that must be considered by health practitioners and your medical treatment decision maker.

Please speak to your GP to assist you in writing down your wishes. It will give your doctor and your medical treatment decision maker greater certainty that they are making the right decision for you if needed. There is no prescribed form in Victoria for making an advance care directive. It can be a letter you write, or a form given to you by your general practitioner

<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/patient-care/advance-care-planning-forms>

We hope that this newsletter has been helpful to your health care needs. Should you like to discuss any of this information further, please don't hesitate to call our friendly administration team to book in with your General Practitioner and healthcare team.

QUICK RECAP

	FREQUENCY	COST
Health Assessment 75+	Yearly, or as needed	Free with Australian Medicare Card
Chronic Disease Care Plan	Yearly, or reviewed 3 monthly	Free with Australian Medicare Card
Medication Review	Yearly, or more frequently if deemed necessary	Free with Australian Medicare Card

CONTACT DETAILS: South Wangaratta Medical Centre.

47-51 Joyce Way, Wangaratta Vic 3677. **PH:** 03 5713 9299 **Fax:** 03 5718 0205

Email: southwangarattamc@gmail.com