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ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Debbie Paterson, Maddie Dixon, Marina Paterson, Julie Patterson, Cheryl Nicholas, Kerry Bennington, Lisa Pemberton

SURGERY HOURS AND SERVICES

CONSULTATIONS can be arranged by phoning. 5655 1355

Monday to Friday 9.00am–5.30pm

Saturday 9.00am–12.00noon
(phone lines open at 8.30am)

The practice prefers to see patients by appointment in order to minimise people's waiting time.

Home visits can be arranged when necessary. If you need a home visit, please contact the surgery as soon as possible after 8.30am.

For After hours emergency medical attention – at night, weekends or public holidays please call 03 56542753 where a nurse will triage your needs and contact the doctor on call.

YOUR DOCTOR

FEBRUARY 2025



**HEALING
WITH LIGHT**



**WHY WOUND
CARE MATTERS**



**SWEETCORN
HEALTH BENEFITS**



**WRIST
ESSENTIALS**

Compliments of your GP

Understanding and managing back pain

Back pain is very common, but that doesn't make it any easier to deal with. It can interfere with daily activities, work, sleep, and even your mood. The good news is that there's a lot you can do to manage your back pain, so it doesn't take over your life.

What causes back pain?

Most back pain is caused by musculoskeletal changes or mechanical issues affecting the muscles, ligaments, joints, discs, or nerves. These problems are often linked to minor injuries, poor posture, overexertion, a sedentary lifestyle, or being overweight.

As you age, you're more likely to develop conditions like arthritis or osteoarthritis, which can affect your spine. This increases the risk of vertebral fractures, herniated discs, and stiffness, limiting movement and quality of life.

Sometimes, back pain isn't directly about your back. It can be referred pain from other conditions—even stress and depression. In many cases a cause may not be easily found, particularly when the pain is chronic (lasting longer than three months).

When to seek help

Pain is your body's way of signalling that something needs attention. Seek professional advice if your pain lasts more than six weeks, doesn't improve with rest, or if you're feeling overwhelmed, exhausted, or emotionally distressed.

Some signs may indicate a more serious problem, if you experience any of these, book a consultation promptly:

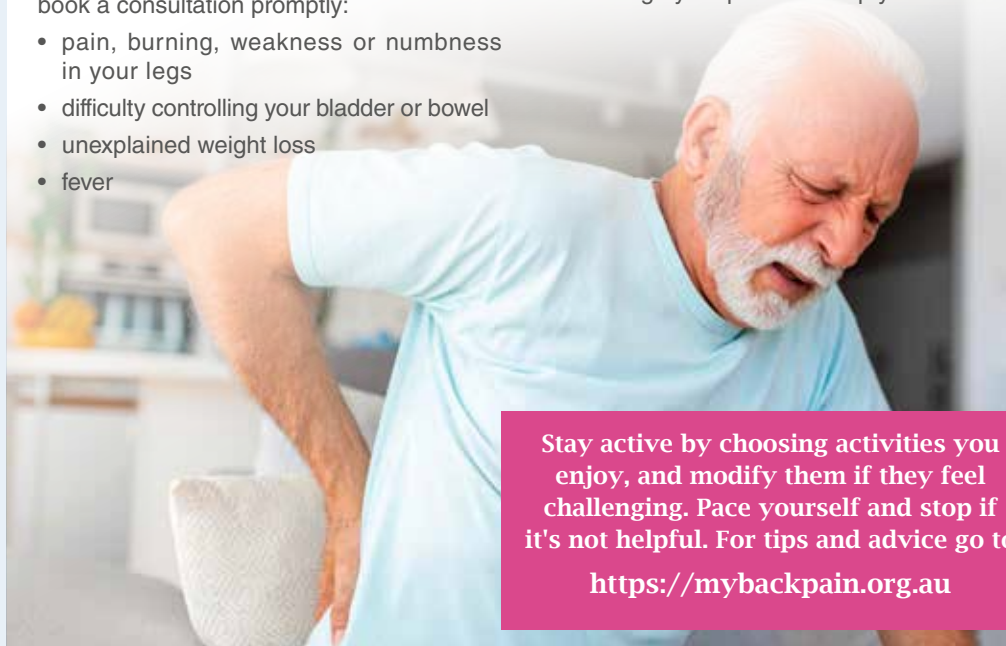
- pain, burning, weakness or numbness in your legs
- difficulty controlling your bladder or bowel
- unexplained weight loss
- fever

Active self-care for your back

Active care for your back is often more effective than treatments like medication or surgery. Here are some ways to strengthen and support your back while preventing or relieving pain:

- Move more: even if pain limits you, gentle stretching and movement can help.
- Exercise regularly: strengthening your core and back muscles helps support your spine and reduces strain.
- Maintain a healthy weight: losing even a few kilos can reduce pressure on your back.
- Set up your space: whether it's your desk or bed, a comfortable and ergonomic setup can help prevent pain.
- Improve mental health: try relaxation techniques, stress management or mind-body exercises such as yoga or Tai chi. Seek professional help for personalised advice.

If back pain is affecting your life, see your GP. We can offer advice, reassurance, and, if necessary, refer you for further tests and treatments. Together, we can create a plan to manage your pain and help you live well.



Stay active by choosing activities you enjoy, and modify them if they feel challenging. Pace yourself and stop if it's not helpful. For tips and advice go to <https://mybackpain.org.au>

Our newsletter is free! Please take a copy with you.

Don't ignore that cut - tips for preventing infection

Most people have suffered a small nick while chopping vegetables or a scrape from falling. While minor cuts and abrasions usually heal without problems, it's important to know how to spot and prevent infections.

A skin infection happens when germs like bacteria, viruses, or fungi get into your skin through a cut, scrape, or even a bug bite. Infections may stay on the surface or spread deeper, making them harder to treat.

Signs of an infection

Keep an eye on your wound; it might be infected if you notice:

- pus or fluid draining from it
- redness around the wound
- swelling or pain
- a pimple or crust forming over the cut
- fever or feeling unwell.

If the pain worsens after a few days, redness spreads, or fluid continues to drain, contact your doctor. High fever or feeling very unwell could mean a serious infection needing immediate care.

In some cases, there's a higher risk of infection. Those with diabetes or weakened immune systems are more vulnerable, as are older adults and people who are overweight, since they

may heal more slowly. The risk also increases if the wound is deep, jagged, or caused by dirty objects, animals, or human bites.

Preventing an infected cut

The best way to stop infections is to act fast when you get hurt. Clean the wound right away with water, apply antiseptic cream, and cover with a clean dressing that doesn't stick to the wound. For larger cuts or heavy bleeding, see a doctor. Animal or human bites also need professional care.

Why it matters

Untreated infections can spread under the skin (cellulitis) or into the bloodstream, causing severe complications like sepsis. Early care makes a big difference, so don't wait if something feels wrong.

By acting quickly and monitoring your wound, you can help it heal safely and avoid complications. Stay safe and take care of your skin—it's your body's first line of defence!



Sweetcorn: for health and vitality

Sweetcorn is one of summer's most versatile and delicious crops. Whether you're enjoying it fresh off the cob, roasted on the barbecue, or added to salads, it's not just tasty but also packed with nutrients. Let's take a closer look at why it deserves a spot on your plate this summer.

Nutritional highlights

Sweetcorn is rich in carbohydrates, providing a steady source of energy. With a low to medium glycaemic index (GI), sweetcorn is digested more slowly, helping to maintain stable blood sugar levels.

Sweetcorn also contains dietary fibre, essential for supporting digestion and keeping you feeling full longer. Fibre helps maintain a healthy gut and can reduce the risk of constipation.

Sweetcorn is high in B vitamins, which help you convert protein, carbohydrates, and fats into energy. They also support nerve and muscle function, healthy skin and eyes, hormone balance, brain function, and immune health.

Folate (B9) is essential for cell growth, red blood cell production, and preventing birth defects during pregnancy.

Sweetcorn's yellow colour is thanks to carotenoids like lutein and zeaxanthin, which act as antioxidants. These compounds have a range of health benefits, but are known for supporting eye health.

Lastly, sweetcorn contains essential minerals which support a range of important functions, including: healthy red blood cell production (iron), muscle and nerve function (potassium and magnesium), bone health (phosphorus), immune function (zinc), and energy production (copper).

In summary, sweetcorn is a whole food, offering a mix of beneficial nutrients and fibre. Moderation is important if you're watching your carbohydrate intake, but for most people, it's a healthy, satisfying food that fits well into a balanced summer diet.



Cheesy corn fritters

These old-fashioned favourites are easy, cheesy and tasty, making a nutritious addition to school lunchboxes that kids will love!

INGREDIENTS

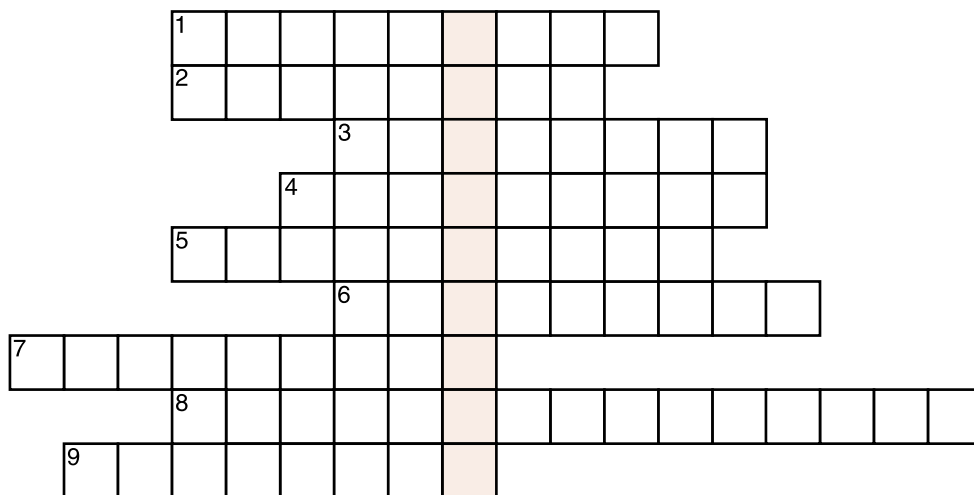
- 1 cup plain flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 2 eggs
- 1/3 cup milk
- 1 cup (160g) corn kernels (fresh, frozen, or canned)
- 1 cup corn kernels blended
- 1/2 cup grated cheddar cheese
- 1/4 cup grated parmesan cheese
- 2 Tbsp fresh parsley, chopped
- Olive oil for frying

INSTRUCTIONS

- In a bowl, whisk flour, baking powder, eggs, and milk into a smooth batter.
- Stir in corn, cheeses and parsley. Be careful to not over mix the mixture.
- Heat oil in a non-stick pan over medium heat.
- Drop heaped tablespoons of batter into the pan, flatten slightly, and cook for 2–3 minutes on each side until golden.
- Cool on a rack before packing into lunchboxes or serve warm with a yogurt or hummus dip.

HIDDEN WORD PUZZLE

1. A flexible, tough tissue that cushions joints and supports structures like the nose and ears.
2. An injury caused by something that rubs or scrapes against the skin.
3. Invisible light that has a longer wavelength than red light.
4. The invasion and growth of harmful microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses, or fungi, in the body.
5. A mental health condition that causes persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness
6. A condition that causes pain, swelling, and stiffness in the joints
7. Doing or involving a lot of sitting lack of movement.
8. The system of muscles, bones, joints, and connective tissues that support movement and provide structure to the body.
9. This activity is necessary for you health and wellbeing.



The hidden word is:

ANSWERS CAN BE FOUND ON THE BACK PAGE

Wrist structure, common injuries and prevention

As summer holidays wind down, many of us head back to our desks and resume repetitive tasks like typing. These activities can lead to or worsen wrist problems, but learning about wrist structure and ways to protect them can help you stay pain-free and productive.

Wrist structure

Your wrists are small but mighty joints; designed to be both flexible and durable to handle countless daily movements.

Take a moment to rotate your hand; you're seeing the work of eight small carpal bones which make up your wrist and connect your hand to your forearm. Ligaments connect these bones, providing flexibility, strength and stability, while cartilage helps ensure smooth, pain-free motion.

Your forearm muscles provide power and control for wrist movements. Strengthening these muscles can also increase grip strength—an important indicator of overall body strength.

Wrist injuries

Despite your wrist's clever structure, it's still vulnerable to damage. Injuries, lifestyle, and underlying medical issues can all contribute to wrist problems.

- Sprains, strains, fractures, and cartilage tears are usually caused by falls or activities where your wrist takes the impact.
- Lifestyle factors include smoking, lack of exercise and stretching. Overuse or repetitive wrist movements may lead to repetitive strain injury (RSI), causing swelling, pain, stiffness and weakness.
- Underlying issues can include autoimmune disorders, arthritis and diabetes.

Carpal tunnel syndrome, for example, is a common wrist condition with several

contributing factors. Inflammation causes swelling in the wrist and compresses the median nerve, leading to pain, numbness, and tingling in the fingers. Repetitive hand movements often worsen it.

Maintain wrist health with proper ergonomics and lifestyle adjustments. Keep them strong with exercises, flexible with stretches, and contact us if you have concerns.



Try these simple wrist stretches

Wrist Flexor Stretch:

Extend arm, palm up. Gently pull back fingers towards you with the other hand.

Hold 15-30 seconds. Repeat on the other side.

Wrist Extensor Stretch:

Extend arm, palm down. Gently pull hand down towards you.

Hold 15-30 seconds. Repeat on the other side.

Note: Warm up first with wrist circles, stretch using light pressure, avoid discomfort or pain.

Lighten the load: backpack safety tips for the school year

School has started for the year so it's time to check your child's backpack.

Ill-fitting, oversized, or heavy bags can strain the spine, leading to neck and back pain, and even headaches.

The backpack should:

- fit your child properly, with a padded back and shoulder straps
- sit at the top of their hips with hip belts to distribute the weight evenly
- weigh no more than 10% of your child's body weight when packed.

Choosing the right backpack keeps your child comfortable and ready to learn!



Pack heavier items close to their back and use all compartments to spread the weight evenly.



Healing with light: exploring the power of light therapy

Light is an essential part of life on earth, and now it's growing in popularity as a tool for healing. Let's explore how light therapy works, its benefits, and what you should watch out for.

The science of light therapy

Light therapy uses specific wavelengths of light—red, blue, and infrared—that interact with the body in unique ways. These wavelengths are measured in nanometres (nm), determining how deeply they penetrate the skin and tissues:

Blue Light (400–500 nm): Its shorter wavelengths don't penetrate deeply, making it ideal for skin issues.

Red Light (620–700 nm): Goes deeper than blue light to stimulate cells and improve blood flow.

Infrared Light (700–1,000 nm): Reaches the deepest layers of muscles, joints, and bones, helping cells produce energy and improving circulation.

Does light therapy actually work?

Research shows that light therapy holds promise for certain health concerns:

Blue light is effective for some skin conditions, especially acne, by reducing inflammation and fighting bacteria. It may also promote faster healing of minor wounds- like cuts and abrasions.

Red Light is often used to reduce muscle soreness, joint inflammation, and chronic pain. It supports healing by improving blood flow and promoting cellular repair.

Infrared light is commonly used for treating deeper tissues, including muscles, joints, and bones. It may help with conditions such as arthritis, tendon injuries, and post-surgical recovery, but further studies are still ongoing.

While initial evidence is positive, ongoing research is needed to confirm the full scope of conditions light therapy can treat effectively.

Is light therapy safe?

Light therapy is generally safe when used correctly, but it's not suitable for everyone, and its long-term effects remain unclear.

Unlike ultraviolet (UV) light, it does not damage the skin, however if it's not used properly it can still damage your skin and eyes, especially with higher-intensity devices. People with sensitive skin, certain skin conditions, or underlying medical issues should consult a healthcare professional before starting light therapy.

The bottom line

Light therapy is a promising tool for healing and recovery, particularly for muscle pain, joint health, and wound care. However, it's important to select the right type of light therapy for your needs, use it safely under professional guidance, and consult with a healthcare provider to determine whether it's right for you.

CARE FOR YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY DURING PERIODS OF HIGH TEMPERATURES TO AVOID HEAT-RELATED HEALTH PROBLEMS

- Heat kills more Australians than any other natural disaster. Climate change is resulting in more hot days and more intense heatwaves.
- Now more than ever it's important to know the risks of heat and how to protect yourself and others.
- Heat kills more Australians than any natural disaster.
- Heat can cause serious and potentially fatal health problems such as heat exhaustion and heatstroke, trigger sudden events like heart attack or stroke, or worsen existing medical conditions like kidney or lung disease.
- Extreme heat can affect anybody.
- Those most at-risk include people over 65 years, babies and young children, pregnant women, people with acute or chronic health problems and people who are socially isolated.

OLDER PEOPLE AND EXTREME HEAT

People over 65 years are more susceptible to heat-related health problems because their bodies are less able to adjust to changes in temperature. They are also more likely to have underlying medical conditions and be taking medication that may interfere with the body's ability to regulate temperature.

Older people with medical conditions should review their care plan with their doctor to ensure that these conditions are well-controlled before the weather gets hot. Ask your doctor if you are at increased risk of heat-related health problems in hot weather. The doctor may advise that you adjust your fluid intake, avoid certain medications or adjust the dosage during periods of extreme heat.

Take steps to protect yourself and others by keeping cool, staying hydrated, planning ahead and checking in with others.

- **Keep cool:** use air conditioning or a fan, wear light and loose-fitting clothing, and keep skin wet, using a spray bottle or damp sponge and by taking cool showers.
- **Stay hydrated:** during days of extreme heat, keep drinking water before you feel thirsty, especially if outdoors or performing physical activity.
- **Plan ahead:** Cancel or reschedule activities for the coolest part of the day and avoid exercising and being outdoors in the heat.
- **Check in with others.** Let family, friends and neighbours know you are OK or check in with those at increased risk or who may need your support during days of extreme heat.
- **Monitor the weather forecast** and the Bureau of Meteorology Heatwave warnings online or via the Bureau's app. Subscribe to receive Department of Health heat health warnings.

WHERE TO GET HELP

In an emergency, call triple zero (000)

Your GP (doctor) – if you, or someone you know, may be suffering from a heat-related health problems

NURSE-ON-CALL Tel. 1300 60 60 24 – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)

Contact the Victorian Virtual Emergency Department – for non-life-threatening emergencies

Maternal and Child Health Line, Victoria Tel. 132 229 (24 hours).

Questions to ask at your next doctor's visit

Asking questions is key to good communication with your doctor. To make the most of your visit, write down what you want to know in the area below. Bring this list to your next appointment so you remember what you wanted to ask.

DOCTOR'S NAME	DATE	TIME

1.
2.
3.

NOTES:

PUZZLE ANSWERS:

1. Cartilage
2. Abrasion
3. Infrared
4. Infection
5. Depression
6. Arthritis
7. Sedentary
8. Musculoskeletal
9. Exercise

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.