



APRIL 2015

A warm welcome to the Millhouse Community and other readers.

Haven't the first three months of 2015 flown, with cooler nights announcing that winter will soon be here?

The sun's rays are taking longer to reach earth and less vitamin D is able to be produced in the skin through sun exposure. Autumn is time to consider supplementing with vitamin D to enhance the body's immune function and protect us against the winter respiratory infections. *I suggest supplementing with 4000 units daily for adults (cholecalciferol 1 tab every two weeks) and a lesser amount for children (500 units per day for under 2 years, 1000 units 2-5 year, 2000 units 5 yr upward).*

In the February newsletter I discussed turmeric's healing properties and I hope you have been adding this to your food. Remember to use it generously in cooking during winter and even more so when coughs and colds come your way. *(1/2 tsp powder in warmed water, or even better coconut or almond milk, 2 - 3 times daily).* Also boost your immune response with the Flu Vaccine which has just arrived. We will remind you by text and email to make an appointment to see the Practice Nurses for immunisation.



#### 2015 Medical Team

**Dr Viji** as I previously mentioned brings expertise in skin conditions with advanced skills in the removal of skin cancers. She is fluent in English, Tamil and Malayalam. Dr Viji is working Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

**Dr Therese** a skilled family practitioner who has a special focus in women's and children's health is working Tuesday and Thursday, complementing Dr Viji. Therese is fluent in English and Arabic.

Drs Viji and Therese are both at 130 Millhouse with Dr Aileen.



We welcome back practice nurses Maree and Kate from ill health; Maree is now leading the nurse team.

Jacqui joined us this year; she has an enthusiasm for diabetes self-management and complements our other skilled practice nurses Ruth, Judy and Leonie.

#### At-Risk-Individual programme (ARI)

Our practice nurse team are actively engaged in the ARI – At Risk Individual programme - and we now have over 140 people enrolled. This has been welcomed by many with major health issues, as an opportunity to explore improved lifestyle choices, through eating nutritious meals, undertaking regular exercise, and sharing life's stresses, as well as accessing community and specialist support.

Using the free nurse ARI consultation, Practice Nurse Jacqui is now organising time to assist the many prediabetics, those with an hba1c blood test between 45 and 49, to encourage them to adopt healthier living strategies and decrease their risk of disease. [Learn more about this...](#)

**Appointment Cancellation:** We are still receiving late cancellation of doctor appointments where insufficient time does not allow their reallocation to other needy persons. Please give at least 2 hours' notice if you cannot attend. We are sympathetic if exceptional circumstances prevail but if only minutes' notice is given, your Doctor may invoice you for the consultation. Patients who 'Do Not Arrive' for their appointments on more than two occasions will be charged for the consultation.

**15 min Appointments:** A consultation is for 15 minutes. Please decide the two most important issues you would like discuss with your doctor, and if time permits, lesser problems may be attended to. If a consultation continues beyond 30min an additional fee may be charged by your doctor.

**E-appointments:** Don't forget E-appointments which are being used more and more. It is an easy and convenient way to book an appointment on line at [www.millhousemedical.co.nz](http://www.millhousemedical.co.nz) allowing you to select your doctor and the appointment time.

#### Spice Medicine: Ginger

In the [last newsletter](#) writing about Turmeric, I reminded you that a spice is a dried seed, fruit, bark or flower of a plant or herb that is used in small quantities to flavour, colour or preserve food, and that many spices are used in traditional medicine. Spices were the most valuable items of trade from ancient times through to the medieval period, and only in recent years has modern medicine rediscovered their importance in preventing illness and treating disease.

In this newsletter I briefly discuss the importance of GINGER in health and its use in disease.

Ginger - *Zingiber officinale* - is a herbaceous flowering perennial plant which annually grows stems about a meter tall bearing narrow green leaves and yellow flowers, and also has a rhizome root which has been used as a spice and medicine for over 5000 years.

Ginger originated from south China, spreading across Asia, to West Africa then to the Caribbean. It was exported to Europe in the first century AD.



#### In this issue...

- Winter is coming
- Doctor skills
- Practice Nurse Jacqui and the ARI (AT RISK INDIVIDUALS) programme
- Appointments are 15 minutes
- Problem of late cancellation of appointments

...and this month Dr Ric continues the series on "Spices as Medicine"



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Ginger is a hot fragrant spice added to sweet and savoury dishes. The fleshy young roots can be used raw or squeezed for juice. They can be steeped in boiling water to make a tea, pickled in vinegar, frozen or dried to grind into a powder for later use. Ginger's characteristic pungent smell is due to the gingerol volatile oils, one of more than 100 chemical compounds contained in the rhizome.

Like turmeric, ginger has a long history of medicinal uses in the ancient Asian medical traditions; it is employed to treat many disorders including gastrointestinal (nausea, indigestion, diarrhoea, constipation, motion sickness, morning sickness in pregnancy), arthritis, heart disease, headache and chronic infections.

### Ginger in Diabetes

In 2013, a group of Iranian medics reported on a [randomised blinded trial](#) in which 64 adult non-insulin diabetics on medication were given 3000mg freshly ground ginger daily, to determine whether taking ginger could improve their diabetic state. After eight weeks those on ginger showed a significant improvement in blood glucose with a lowering of HbA1c, which indicates less glucose damage to red blood cell protein. The researchers also found that

#### Ginger medicinal effects may be helpful in the following

- Gastrointestinal symptoms - relieving nausea, motion sickness & morning sickness in pregnancy.
- Pain & swelling - arthritis, bursitis, muscle and joint sprains & strains.
- Diabetes - improving glucose control, increasing insulin sensitivity promoting the absorption of glucose into cells.
- Obesity - improves metabolic rate and decreases absorption of calorie dense foods.
- Heart disease - reducing platelet stickiness & lowering lipids
- Alzheimer disease - appears to inhibit plaque deposition in the brain.
- Cataracts - may delay the onset of cataracts.
- Anti-bacterial effect for coughs & colds and helicobacter pylori.
- Anticancer effect - less inflammation, may normalise cell division and inhibit cell growth

insulin levels, triglycerides (white fat) and LDL cholesterol were lessened and the blood inflammatory markers had improved. Two patients reported minor indigestion, the only side effect noted in the study.

This is the first human study that showed the consumption of ginger improved diabetic control and lowered the 'bad' oxidised cholesterol. Previously only animal studies had demonstrated ginger's lipid lowering effect.

Ginger can also thin the blood through its antiplatelet action and may assist in lowering blood pressure; these are added benefits for the diabetic who is at greater risk of having artery disease. Animal experiments also suggest that ginger has neuroprotective action that may delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease, a condition from which diabetics increasingly are suffering.

### Ginger in Arthritis

The anti-inflammatory effects of ginger have been known for centuries. A [1992 retrospective study](#) with rheumatoid and osteoarthritis patients demonstrated improved joint pain. [One trial in knee arthritis](#) showed significant symptom relief but another study showed only initial improvement. Despite that study's lack of proven long term effect, a trial of ginger therapy is worth considering for arthritis relief. (I suggest use in combination with turmeric and cayenne pepper)

Ginger's action is similar to non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs but it has additional neutralising effects via other inflammatory pathways (inhibits cytokine release from the 'clean-up' macrophage cells).

Ginger may cause gastrointestinal symptoms but much less than NSAID medication.

#### Simple ways to use ginger

There are endless ways to use ginger in cooking and drinks.

- Fresh ginger root can be peeled, grated, minced or sliced thinly and used in savoury & stir fried dishes, curries & omelettes, or sprinkled on baked/roasted meats & fish.
- Thin slivers of ginger root can be roasted with vegetables.

- Add fresh ginger to any drink.
- Use ground dried ginger in baking.

#### • Traditional Cold-Relieving Tea

Add 2-3cm of peeled or grated ginger root to 2 cups of water, boil then simmer 5 minutes. Add lemon and honey to taste.

1/2 tsp cayenne pepper, 1-2 cloves of crushed garlic and turmeric may also be added, simmer for a further 5 min.

Cool and strain.

- **Ginger essential oil** rub applied to sore and painful muscles.

**Remember** 6 parts fresh ginger = 1 part dried ginger but use more according to taste.

**Store** fresh ginger root in the fridge. It can also be frozen, pickled in vinegar or alcohol.

Ground ginger should be replaced frequently as with other spices it quickly loses its potency when powdered.

### Ginger in nausea, motion sickness and morning sickness

Ginger has been found to be superior to Dramamine in relieving motion sickness. In 2014 researchers reviewing all studies on [ginger's use in pregnancy](#) concluded that taking 1gm daily for at least four days was effective in relieving the nausea and vomiting of morning sickness. No adverse effects were observed with ginger during pregnancy.

Ginger may also be used to prevent nausea & vomiting after surgery. Ginger can be used in combination with other therapies in treating cancer. It also has antimicrobial effects which may support the eradication of helicobacter stomach infection.

Consider combining ginger with the spices, turmeric, cayenne, cinnamon and garlic for greater beneficial effect.

*Caution: due to its blood thinning effects, take care when consuming lots of ginger with anticoagulant medication such as aspirin, warfarin, or dabigatran (Pradaxa).*

Yours in good health

**Dr Richard J Coleman**

#### References:

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