

MILLHOUSE INTEGRATIVE MEDICAL CENTRE NEWS

MARCH /APRIL 2011

Hi to everyone in the Millhouse Community

This year is flying by and three months have gone. Did you make any new year's resolutions to improve your health? Commencing an exercise programme, losing weight, eating only nutritious foods, sharing your resources with someone in need, making time for relaxation and if you smoked deciding in 2011 to QUIT.

SMOKING

I have been impressed with the number of patients wanting to STOP SMOKING in recent months. This change may be due to the increased cigarette cost but the FREE availability of NICOTINE REPLACEMENT PATCHES and GUM to reduce withdrawal cravings and CHAMPIX which falsely stimulates the brain's nicotine receptors, may also have encouraged a number to cease smoking. (Nicotine patches must be trialed before CHAMPIX can be prescribed.)

STOPPING SMOKING is one of the most important strategies for improving health. Carbon monoxide from smoking slowly smothers the oxygen life-giving energy processes, leading to slow cell death. Tar, heavy metals like cadmium, and smoke irritation cause disaster in the airways and vascular system with lung inflammation, lung cancer, heart attacks and strokes, as well as increased incidence of tumours in other organs.

If you are a SMOKER your doctor at each consultation will remind you to think about QUITTING. The clinic records SMOKING/NON SMOKING status on all patients and actively promotes STOP SMOKING EDUCATION in tobacco users.

EMAIL COMMUNICATION

We have used patient email communication for four years to communicate blood results and other e-investigations to you; we may be the only Howick-Pakuranga practice doing this.

OUR POLICY is to inform you of blood and other results as soon as possible. If you change your email please let us know your **NEW EMAIL ADDRESS** as soon as possible.

REMEMBER PRESCRIPTIONS can be ordered on line at www.millhousemedical.co.nz. Click on the 'prescription request' and a new window will open where you can write your request then 'press' **SEND MESSAGE** at the bottom of the page. This is easy to do and easy to process. GIVE IT A GO.

LEAVING EMAIL MESSAGES

We are receiving more return messages after e-investigation results have been sent, but we lack the resources to answer your queries. If you would prefer an email consultation (charged) with your DOCTOR or NURSE, instead of visiting the surgery, please let us know.

TELEPHONE COMMUNICATION

We have had a number of teething problems with our new INTERNET telephone system. Thank you for your patience in this matter. We will continue to patient survey to see what you are experiencing, so we can improve our communication with you.

CORNERSTONE ACCREDITATION ACHIEVED

Special thanks to all the medical staff who worked on policy and processes enabling the clinic to achieved certification from the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners.

DOCTOR THERESE is changing her Tuesday and Thursday morning to afternoon consulting between 2.30-6.30pm which I'm sure will be enjoyed by many who prefer a late afternoon visit.

FLU, COLDS AND WINTER AILMENTS

The weather has changed with chillier nights, with more rain and wind as the days shorten and sunshine hours lessen. Cough and cold infections are back with the occasional croup and the winter FLU SEASON will soon be upon us.

Here are some strategies to help you survive the winter ills.

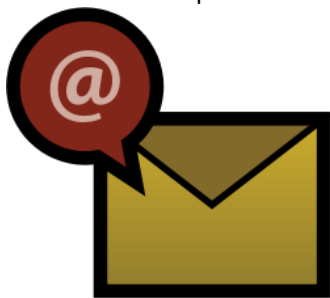
Firstly,

PREVENTION IS BEST. The **FLU VACCINATION** has arrived and you may already have been reminded to visit and receive the immunisation.

The flu vaccination is FREE for those over 65 years, if you have a chronic disease like asthma, heart and diabetes or are pregnant.

Secondly,

VITAMIN D. I have spoken about this amazing nutrient in previous newsletters.



The official health policy is to use vaccination as the prime way of escaping from influenza. I would suggest that Vitamin D may be even more important and provides additional protection from the common cold and the flu virus.

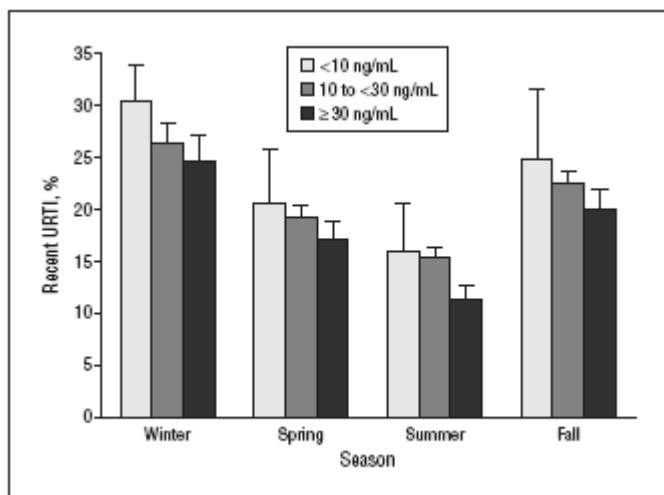


Figure. Participants with recent upper respiratory tract infection (URTI)

Take a look at the diagram from the third US National Health Survey¹, which investigated the incidence of the common cold and upper respiratory tract infections (URTIs) in 18,833 participants throughout the year. URTIs were highest in the winter and lowest in summer as we would expect.

Now look at the columns with participants grouped according to their vitamin D levels and the season. Those with the highest Vitamin D level (dark bar, >30ng/ml x2.5 = 75nmol/l the blood units we use) had significantly fewer infections throughout the year than participants with lower D levels.

When blood levels are greater than 75nmol/l Vitamin D promotes protective white blood cell immunity in the body to produce natural antibacterial/viral protein peptides to fight the infectious invaders.

MILLHOUSE VITAMIN D FACTS. 25% of our patients are deficient in vitamin D with levels less than 50nmol/l. This is primarily in those with dark skin; Indians are the most affected, then Middle Eastern, Maori and Polynesian. 65% of our practice population has levels below the 75nmol/l that is now internationally being recommended as the lower acceptable level for vitamin D.

A vitamin D level of 75nmol/l equates to a person receiving between 3000-4000 units each day. Exposing the arms, legs and upper body to sunlight for 20 minutes will easily produce 30,000 units of vitamin D. Please don't get burned and take care tanning during the intense ultraviolet midday sun.

Vitamin D supplementation. If you have had a reasonable amount of sunlight during summer, you will probably enter winter with an adequate vitamin D level. However for dark skinned and those who spend their time indoors your Vitamin D levels will be low and I recommend that adults take 50,000 units (1 tablet cholecalciferol) 2 weekly in the winter and four weekly in the summer. Children need at least 1000 units per day and those over 10 years the same as for an adult. Babies need a lesser amount.

Children's Vitamin D3 drops are available at the clinic. I strongly recommend all children with chronic ear, nose and chest infection, croup and asthma take extra vitamin D during the winter. There have also been recent reports of children with asthma going into remission with vitamin D supplementation.

TURMERIC (*Curcuma longa*, sometimes referred to as Indian saffron)

My favorite medicinal spice. Turmeric, is a member of the ginger family, grows in South Asia where each year the rhizome roots are harvested, boiled and dried in hot ovens, then ground into deep orange yellow powder. In Asia the leaves are also used in cooking and the root used fresh, as we do with ginger.

In traditional Indian and Chinese medicine turmeric is used for rheumatism, body aches, digestive and liver disorders and skin infections. Its characteristic yellow is used to colour foods and as a spice to provide flavor, especially in curries, where its antioxidant action enables the food to last longer.

The active ingredient in turmeric is **curcumin**. Studies have demonstrated curcumin has anti-inflammatory properties similar to ibuprofen but not as powerful as cortisone, and also has a limited antibiotic action.

I suggest at the beginning of cough, cold and influenza symptoms take 1/2-1tsp turmeric powder, mixed with vegetable, fruit juice or warm milk, three times daily.



Turmeric has also been observed to inhibit a number of cancer cells lines and lower cholesterol.

Finally let me tell you about the observations of Professor Gregory Cole, associate director of the UCLA Alzheimer Research Centre. Reports from India suggested that Alzheimer's disease was much less than in developed countries. Cole observed that the brains of older Indians at autopsy were tinged yellow with turmeric and appeared more youthful. With his colleagues they have demonstrated that turmeric and curcumin cross the blood brain barrier, slow brain-aging in 'Alzheimer-bred' rats and extends life expectancy in laboratory mice by 10-12%.

Consider adding turmeric to your diet regularly for improved brain health, extended longevity and for infections.

Yours in good health

Dr Richard J Coleman.

¹ Ginde A et al, Arch Internal Medicine 2009;169(4) 384-390