

HEALTH MATTERS

ST PETERS FAMILY PRACTICE NEWSLETTER

MARCH – JUNE 2010

ST. PETERS FAMILY PRACTICE
ACCREDITED GENERAL MEDICAL PRACTICE
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PRACTICE NURSE: ISLA YIANNOULLOU

PRACTICE HOURS:

MONDAY – FRIDAY 8.30 AM – 6.00 PM

AFTERHOURS:

DR. PEDLER PROVIDES PERSONAL AFTERHOURS COVER MONDAY TO FRIDAY, EXCEPT BETWEEN THE HOURS OF 10.00 PM AND 7.00 AM WHEN CALLS WILL BE DIRECTED TO OUR LOCUM SERVICE. WHEN DR PEDLER IS NOT AVAILABLE, AFTER THESE HOURS OR ON WEEK-ENDS, OUR PAGING SERVICE WILL OFFER YOU A HOME VISIT FROM OUR LOCUM SERVICE OR DIRECT YOU TO AVAILABLE HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS.

IN THIS ISSUE

- ***INFLUENZA & Whooping Cough Vaccination- the importance of being vaccinated now!***
- ***CYCLING is the new golf! Dr. Pedler tells us how to set up our bikes for comfort and best performance.***
- ***30% of Australians are deficient in VITAMIN D! Dr Taylor tells us what we need to know.***
- ***EASTER HOLIDAY surgery opening times.***

SWINE FLU INCLUDED IN THIS YEAR'S FLU VACCINE

This year's seasonal flu vaccine protects against three new strains of flu virus and includes the H1N1 (pandemic flu) virus strain. There are three important messages we want to convey:

- **We want to encourage everyone to have this year's flu vaccination, not just those at high risk.**
- **The government has increased the eligibility criteria for free flu vaccination.**
- **Have it as soon as possible – a second wave of H1N1 is expected to appear much earlier than the seasonal flu.**

Health authorities are concerned that vaccination coverage currently remains below what is needed to protect the community against an anticipated second wave of pandemic H1N1 influenza this year. Based on northern hemisphere experience they are expecting the flu to arrive early, and more than 90% of that Influenza, will be swine flu.



**IT'S IMPORTANT YOUR BIKE IS
SET UP CORRECTLY FOR COMFORT
AND PERFORMANCE, SEE PAGE 2**

Why should everyone be vaccinated? In the 2009 season, 38% of deaths from H1N1 occurred in people with no known risk factors and the median age of death was 53 years, compared with 83 years from seasonal influenza. It is particularly important to vaccinate children, adolescents and young adults as pandemic H1N1 spreads more readily in these age groups.

Am I eligible for a free flu vaccine? In addition to those aged 65 years and over, free vaccine is available for pregnant women and anyone over 6 months of age who is at increased risk of complications of influenza, including those with chronic disease. For example if you have: diabetes, cardiac disease, lung disease like severe asthma, kidney disease, impaired immunity from cancer or neurological conditions like seizures and MS. Eligibility also includes all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged 15 years and over. If you are not eligible for a free vaccine, we have stocks available here for a cost of \$20.00.

A word of warning about **WHOOPING COUGH!** Despite high vaccination coverage rates in infants since 2001, Pertussis has remained a real problem in the community. We have seen several cases here in our practice recently. Symptoms include an exhausting cough that lasts 100 days, so I strongly recommend a booster vaccination. We have vaccine available at the surgery called Adacel or Boostrix which also includes protection against Tetanus and Diphtheria. A bonus for those aged over 50 ... this vaccine will give you life long immunity to tetanus.

Who needs one? Adults planning a pregnancy or for both parents as soon as possible after birth; Adults working or living with young children – and this includes parents, teachers, grandparents and all healthcare workers.

FROM THE DESK OF DR. ADAM PEDLER

CYCLING IS THE NEW GOLF!

With widespread community interest in the Tour Down Under, my son's involvement in a sprint cycling development squad and my own interest in riding for pleasure along the Linea Park, I recently attended a Sports Medicine Cycling Conference. The focus was on cycling injuries, prevention and treatment. Dr. Nick Brown from the Australian Institute of Sport shared with us the following considerations for bike set up that I thought might interest patients who also ride for fitness and pleasure. Despite this technical approach though, remember that you should be comfortable on the bike. Measure using a Plumb Line, a piece of string with a weight on the bottom!

1. Your inside leg seam, trunk and arm lengths provide estimates of frame size, saddle height and reach.
2. Frame size is determined by the inside leg seam x 67%. Example: 85cm inside seam=57 cm seat tube.
The top tube and stem size is determined by torso length, plus arm length divided by 2 and add 4.
Example: 66+64 divided by 2+4= 69 cm. That is for a 58 cm top tube use an 11cm stem (which adds up to 69!) Sounds complicated but it works!
3. Handle bar width is related to shoulder width.
4. Saddle height, measured at the top of the middle of the saddle, = inside seam x 88.3%,
Example: 85 cm x 0.883 = 75cm (from the ground).
5. Saddle position, seat tip to bottom bracket, is 4 to 8 cm depending on saddle type.
6. Saddle to handlebar height depends on body proportions, flexibility and type of cycling...usually 5 to 10 cm (can be 0 if comfortable...e.g. flat bars)
7. Heel drop below pedal spindle = 5 to 10 mm. This is determined by seat height- no heel drop means your seat is too high!)
8. Cleat/shoe location. The big toe joint should be 5 to 10 mm in front of spindle (note millimetres not centimetres).
9. Knee joint to spindle relationship, with cranks horizontal. BACK of knee cap should be 5 to 10 millimetres BEHIND the spindle. If you get knee pain, pay particular attention to this.

Now you're ready for comfortable, injury free riding! It's good to know most reputable bike shops offer a fitting service. Also, please remember road safety and keep ONE METRE away from cars and only ride two abreast, any more is not legal.

[VITAMIN D!](#)

As a part of your annual health check up, we take an early morning, fasting, blood test to measure all the important elements of your health, including Vitamin D levels. A surprising number of patients are deficient, even those who think they are getting enough sun! The following article is available as a hand-out from Reception but I have included it in this newsletter to help you become aware of the important role Vitamin D plays in our well being.

Vitamin D – the sunshine hormone-vitamin that improves

- **immunity to infections**
- **bones**
- **depression**
- **athletic performance**
- **and prevents cancer**

Vitamin D is a steroid hormone with **multiple functions on bone and muscles, calcium metabolism, immune function, stability of genes and brain development.**

One in 4 Australians are risking long term health problems due to vitamin D deficiency – osteoporosis, cancer, winter illnesses, autism, auto-immune diseases like multiple sclerosis and depression. About 30% of Australian adults are deficient (less than 50nmol/L) and a lot more are suboptimal (less than 70nmol/L).

We make vitamin D from cholesterol when the skin is exposed to the sun or UV light, (but not when sunburnt). It is then converted to the active form in the liver and kidney. Only UVB light is effective in producing vitamin D. UVA doesn't, and latest research at the USA FDA indicates that UVA is responsible for the melanoma epidemic. What's more, the UVA light can pass through window glass, so you can be exposed to it indoors or in the car.

Vitamin D is called **the Antibiotic Vitamin.** It is probably why people get colds and influenza in the winter, and not the summer. In 19,000 Americans, people with the **lowest vitamin D got the most colds and flus.** If you are coming down with the flu or a cold you can take 50,000iu a day for 3 days to help ward off the infection.

It **prevents/reduces almost all kinds of cancers** including breast, colon, kidney, ovary, prostate, liver, skin, pancreas, melanoma, myeloma and leukaemia. Prevention of recurrences seems likely too. This protection is achieved when 25OH vitamin D is >100.

But its most well known role is **improving calcium absorption, strengthening bones and preventing osteoporosis** and rickets. Babies are still being diagnosed with rickets especially in dark skinned families where mothers are veiled. Everyone who has a bone fracture should be tested for vitamin D, also if working long hours and having very little sun exposure. Vitamin D **reduces the risk of falls** as it improves muscle strength. People who are low in vitamin D often complain of **muscle weakness, poor balance and diffuse bone pain.** With vitamin D and some minerals we don't need drugs to prevent fractures and reverse osteoporosis. Your 25OH vitamin D level needs to be over 80nmol/L to correct calcium metabolism.

We have always known that Multiple Sclerosis occurs rarely near the equator and much more often in colder places – apparently this is due to insufficient sunlight to generate vitamin D in the skin. Other **auto-immune diseases** such as rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, type 1 diabetes, colitis, polymyalgia rheumatica are also more common in groups with low vitamin D.

It is likely that vitamin D deficiency, during pregnancy or childhood, causes **autism.** Falling vitamin D levels over the last 20 years due to sun-avoidance explain autism's rapid increase in incidence during that same time. Oestrogen and testosterone have very different effects on vitamin D metabolism which may explain why boys are much more often affected than girls.

Many pregnant women are deficient, as it's no longer popular for pregnant women to sunbathe. Previously everyone took babies out to sunbathe daily. A few minutes a day is all that is necessary to make a big difference to brain development. The recent excessive protection of children from the sun is probably contributing to **asthma and frequent infections** as well as learning difficulties and autism. We only need to protect them from burning, not from all sunlight.

Athletic performance

If you are vitamin D deficient, research indicates that the right amount of vitamin D will make you **faster, stronger, and improve your balance and timing**, depending on your training, and dedication. Research from Germany and Russia in the 1930's and 40's found that ultraviolet light (and therefore vitamin D)

- **improved speed** in sprinters and swimming.
- **cardiovascular fitness improved 19%** compared to 2% in people doing similar physical training for ten weeks.
- improved immunity - **halved viral respiratory infections.**
- **50% reduction in sports injuries**

It also **reduces stress fractures**, and **helps heal wounds**.

How do we get vitamin D?

Very few foods contain vitamin D – oily fish is the best. We need to get 90% of it from the sun. How much sun do we need? In Adelaide 5-8 minutes per day between 10am and 3pm in summer on arms, shoulders and face, and 25-40 minutes in winter. Dark skinned people need 6 times more sunlight than fair skins, and since older folk are less efficient at making vitamin D in the skin they need 4 times the exposure that 20 year olds need. Sunscreen SPF 15 reduces the capacity of the skin to make vitamin D by 98%. The UVB is absorbed by the atmosphere early and late in the day so walking at those times will not raise your vitamin D level. Supplements are reasonable and the Australian recommended daily intake is 400-1900 iu per day. Overweight people need the higher amount. I am recommending 1000iu in summer and 2000iu vitamin D3 in winter as I am finding so many people deficient, even among those who think they are getting enough sun. This may still not be enough to get your blood level over 80, preferably over 100nmol/L. Some experts think we need 3-5000iu – of course the sun is better but its hard to achieve.

So, vitamin D has something for everyone, not just prevention of cancer and osteoporosis, but better athletic performance – balance, speed, strength, timing - how good is that?

You can find more information from Dr John Cannell's website www.vitamindcouncil.com which I acknowledge as the inspiration for this article.

FROM THE RECEPTION DESK

There's always a lot happening behind the scenes to run an efficient, accredited medical practice! Over the last three months we have replaced all our computer hardware. If you encountered some of those frustrating moments during the **computer upgrade**, we thank you for your patience!

EASTER combines with week one of the school holidays, and Dr. Pedler will be taking a break. In his absence Dr. Dick Wilson and Dr. Margi Taylor will cover the practice.

Wednesday March 31 st :	Dr. Dick Wilson
Thursday April 1 st :	Dr. Margi Taylor
Friday April 2 nd :	Public Holiday - practice closed
Saturday April 3 rd :	Practice closed
Sunday April 4 th :	Practice closed
Monday April 5 th :	Public Holiday – practice closed
Tuesday April 6 th :	Dr. Margi Taylor
Wednesday April 7 th :	Dr. Pedler resumes consulting 8.30 am – 6.00 pm

