



Women's Health



Fun Stuff

Don't ignore affairs of the heart

Did you know that heart disease is the number one killer for Australian women? In fact, women are 4 times more likely to die from heart disease than breast cancer.

What is your 'absolute risk'?

Your 'absolute risk' of cardiovascular disease (heart, stroke and blood vessel disease) can be estimated by looking at all your risk factors together. Your score indicates your chance of having a problem in the next 5 years. You can calculate your risk at www.cvdcheck.org.au. The good news is that heart disease is largely preventable. You can reduce your risk by addressing these risk factors:

- Smoking
- Physical inactivity
- High blood pressure
- Depression and social isolation
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Being overweight

Risk assessments should begin at age 45 or even earlier if you have a family history. Having a check-up with your GP is the first step.

The role of hormones

Women get heart disease later than men due to protection from the hormone oestrogen. When women take oestrogen for menopause symptoms **before** age 60 it also appears to **reduce** the risk of heart disease. However, it may increase the risk if started after age 60. The contraceptive Pill is usually safe for healthy young women. However, smokers on the Pill have a greatly increased risk of heart disease. For more information about heart disease in women speak to your GP. You can also go to the Heart Foundation's Go Red for Women site at www.goredforwomen.org.au or ring the Heart Foundation's Helpline on 1300 36 27 87.

IBD: maintenance medication vital

Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) is a term used to describe two conditions, ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease, both of which cause inflammation of the bowel.

The warning signs of IBD

IBD can occur at any age, but often begins between the ages of 15-30 years. Unfortunately, the diagnosis is often delayed as the symptoms of IBD are also caused by many other diseases. Symptoms include abdominal pain, diarrhoea, passing blood or mucus from the bowel, tiredness and weight loss.

Serious complications can occur in IBD, including bleeding and blockage of the bowel. Patients have an increased risk of bowel cancer, especially in ulcerative colitis. Both conditions can also affect organs **outside** the bowel, such as the joints, skin and eyes. The diagnosis of IBD is usually made by passing a flexible telescope into the back passage to examine the lower bowel (sigmoidoscopy) or whole colon (colonoscopy).

Keep taking your medication

A range of new and improved medicines is now available, so that the vast majority of people with IBD can lead full and normal lives. Your doctor will choose a medicine based on which part of the bowel is affected, the severity



Recent developments in medication strength and frequency make treatment more convenient.

of the disease and which condition you have. Medication can be taken by mouth (tablets, granules), the back passage (enemas, suppositories and foam) or by injection. Medication is used to treat flare-ups when you have symptoms. It is also taken when you are well (maintenance medication) to keep the disease under control and prevent relapse. Maintenance medication reduces the risk of future deterioration, complications and surgery. It also lowers the risk of developing bowel cancer. Maintenance medication can now be taken once daily in some cases. Never stop it without first checking with your doctor. www.gut.nsw.edu.au. www.crohnsandcolitis.com.au

Reflections on old age

Jacob, age 92, and Rebecca, age 89, have decided to marry. They go for a stroll to discuss the wedding and on the way they pass a chemist. They go in and Jacob says to the pharmacist: "We're about to get married. Do you sell heart medication?" Pharmacist: "Of course we do." Jacob: "How about tablets for blood pressure and diabetes?" Pharmacist: "All kinds." Jacob: "Pills for arthritis and dementia?" Pharmacist: "Definitely." Jacob: "How about creams, liniments and suppositories?" Pharmacist: "You bet!" Jacob: "What about vitamins, sleeping tabs, pills for Parkinson's disease?" Pharmacist: "Absolutely, all types." Jacob: "Medicine for heartburn?" Pharmacist: "We sure do." Jacob: "You sell wheelchairs, walkers and canes?" Pharmacist: "All speeds and sizes." Jacob: "Adult incontinence pants?" Pharmacist: "Sure." Jacob: "Great. We'd like to use this store for our wedding gift register..."

Submitted by Louis Ban

15 Funhalers to win

The Funhaler is a small volume spacer that makes it easy for children to take their aerosol asthma medication. It is simple and fun to use and ensures children get the right dose of medication. Funhaler is available from pharmacies. www.funhaler.com



Enter at our practice website

or post this entry slip to: Funhaler, 11 Carlotta Road Double Bay NSW 2028

Name _____

Address _____

Med. Practice _____

Winners drawn 1 September 2010