



## Welcome Dr Helen Jones

Dr Helen Jones started as a GP registrar in early February. A GP Registrar is a fully qualified medical doctor, undertaking advanced training to specialise in General Practice.

Helen's areas of interest include paediatrics, women's health, pregnancy care/antenatal shared care and sexual health. She is available for appointments on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays between 8am and 2pm.

Before completing her medical degree at the University of Notre Dame Sydney in 2016, Helen worked as a registered nurse for 10 years in emergency medicine. She completed four years of post graduate training in the Illawarra (including additional time in paediatrics and sexual health) before entering general practice. She has completed a Certification of Child and Family Health from Sydney University in 2020 and the National Certificate in Reproduction and Sexual Health in 2019. Helen is also undertaking further training in skin cancer medicine.

Outside of work, Helen enjoys spending time with her young family, keeping active and travelling.

## Arm yourself for Winter

By Dr Julie Blaze

As the seasons continue their march, it is an important time to prepare yourself and your family members to reduce the risk of illness from respiratory viruses that circulate in the community in late Autumn and Winter.

The big three are Influenza, RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus) and Covid-19. Influenza and RSV cause seasonal epidemics. Symptoms range from mild to severe but those over 65 years are at increased risk of more severe illness.

People with medical conditions that lower their immunity, chronic illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, chronic lung disease and cardiac failure as well as pregnant women, infants and people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background are also at increased risk.

Vaccination for influenza is available from April and is free for people most vulnerable to serious illness from six months of age. A private vaccine can be accessed for a charge of around \$30.

Vaccination shortens and lessens the severity of the illness meaning less time off work and less time sick in bed. Stronger and more effective vaccines (adjuvant vaccines) are now available for certain groups.



A new vaccine is available to fight RSV called Arexvy and is indicated for people over 60 years. At this stage it is not free, and costs around \$300 per dose. This will be a significant barrier for a lot of people but hopefully it will become more accessible soon. The RSV vaccine for infants and babies is highly anticipated but not yet available.

Covid-19 infection has never gone away. Currently there are high numbers of infections in our community so please consider if you need a booster.

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation recommends a Covid booster for people over 75 years (or at higher risk of severe Covid infection) and six months duration since their last booster or natural infection. People aged 18 to 74 years should consider a booster depending on their circumstances. Ask your GP at your next appointment about your individual risk.



## Tinnitus awareness

by Dr John Deady

Tinnitus is a condition when people experience a ringing sensation in their ears. Alternatively, the sound may be humming, hissing, whistling, clicking, whooshing or pulsing. Usually, these sounds are something only the person themselves can hear.

This auditory experience, ranging from faint to loud, may occur in one or both ears or “in the head”. It can be mild or severe, and, for some people, the experience causes considerable distress. It might only be temporary, such as after a music concert or using power tools, or it may become chronic.

An estimated two-thirds of Australians have reported experiencing tinnitus at some point in their lives.

Tinnitus can happen in people with normal hearing but is more common for people with hearing loss or vertigo. Both adults and children can be affected, but tinnitus is more common in older adults due to age-related hearing loss.

Multiple factors contribute to tinnitus, including hearing loss, ear wax, exposure to loud noises, infections, Ménière’s disease, tumours, inner ear complications, certain medications, and head injuries. There is also a link between tinnitus and anxiety and depression.

### Diagnosis

Diagnosis involves a discussion of symptoms and a physical examination by your GP. You may be referred to an audiologist for hearing tests, or to an ear, nose, and throat (ENT) specialist for further evaluation and treatment.

### Treatment

Treatment strategies vary based on the underlying cause and the degree of distress caused by tinnitus. Your doctor can advise you about any medications that might worsen tinnitus, such as certain anti-inflammatories, antibiotics and antidepressants. Reducing stress is important as stress and anxiety can make the experience of tinnitus worse.

## Tinnitus prevention

If you frequent noisy environments or use loud equipment, wear ear protection (ear plugs or headphones) to stop symptoms worsening.

Hearing aids, when appropriately fitted, can offer relief by addressing associated hearing loss, reducing listening strain, and diverting attention from tinnitus by enhancing other sounds.



## Glaucoma awareness

By Dr Amy Harkness

Over 300,000 Australians have glaucoma yet 50% are unaware that they have it.

Glaucoma refers to a group of eye diseases which damage the optic nerve. The optic nerve carries visual signals to the brain and glaucoma can cause irreversible loss of sight. The process is usually gradual but significant loss of peripheral vision can occur before the person is aware. Peripheral vision is your vision at the edges of what you see.

### Symptoms

Most commonly, glaucoma is caused by a raised pressure inside the eye. Ninety percent of cases in Australia are Primary Open-Angle glaucoma, which has no obvious symptoms in its early stages. The other less common type, Acute Angle-Closure glaucoma occurs suddenly, with symptoms of eye pain, headache, nausea and vomiting. This type of glaucoma is an emergency requiring immediate treatment.

### Risk factors for glaucoma

- Increasing age (50+)
- Family history of glaucoma
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Cataracts and high eye pressures
- Ethnicity and cultural background (African and Asian).

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## Prevention of glaucoma

Whilst there is no cure and vision loss cannot be returned, early detection and treatment can prevent damage to the optic nerve and further loss of sight.

People over 50 should have an eye check with an optometrist or ophthalmologist every two years (and people of African/Asian descent every two years from the age of 40).

## Management and treatment

Most people can manage glaucoma with eye drops, surgery or laser eye treatment. In some cases, all three methods are required. Treatments aim to lower the pressure inside the eye, allowing normal function of the optic nerve cells.

Whilst treatments help manage the damage and prevent further loss of sight, they cannot restore vision already lost, so early detection is the key.

If you have any of the risk factors described above, organise a check-up with your optometrist or discuss with your GP.

**If you need a doctor outside of hours call Wollongong Radio Doctors on 4228 5522 or the GP Helpline on 1800 022 222**

## GP Availability Autumn 2024

The table (below) is a guide to which doctor works on which days. This may help when scheduling your next appointment.

The roster changes regularly and doctors take holidays from time to time. Your best guide to availability is via online booking (via our website) or call us on 4284 4622.

### Please note:

- Dr Michael Hanson works alternate Mondays and Fridays every 2nd week.
- Dr Saroja Gunasekera offers telehealth medicine.
- \* Doctors alternate on Saturdays as part of a roster. Please ask at reception.

	MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SAT	
	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	
Dr Victoria Bayer	currently on maternity leave											
Dr Julie Blaze	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓						*
Dr John Deady	✓		✓				✓		✓			*
Dr Hayley Glasson	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓				*
Dr Rebecca Goodman	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓			
Dr Saroja Gunasekera			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Dr Jeff Hall			✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		*
Dr Michael Hanson	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		*
Dr Amy Harkness					✓	✓			✓	✓		
Dr Luke Harvey	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		*
Dr Helen Jones	✓				✓	✓			✓			*
Dr Helen Maclean	✓	✓	✓				✓					*
Dr Meaghan Miller-McConochie		✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		
Dr Berlinda Png			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Dr Nikita Robins	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		*

## Fees Policy

Bulli Medical Practice is not a bulk billing practice. It is our policy that payment for consultation is made at the time of your appointment.

Please see our website or ask at reception for our full fee schedule. The out of pocket expense for a standard Level B consultation (15 minutes) is \$56.60.

We have EFTPOS facilities (debit and credit card: Visa & Mastercard but NOT American Express).

Medicare rebates will be sent online directly to Medicare and you will receive your rebate via direct deposit into your nominated bank account.

If payment cannot be made on the day, an account can be issued incurring an administration fee of \$15 which is not Medicare rebatable.

## Privacy & Medical Records

Your medical record is a confidential document.

It is the policy of the practice to maintain security of personal health information at all times and to ensure that this information is only available to authorised members of staff.

The Practice adheres to the national privacy principles. A copy of our privacy policy is available at reception and on our website.

## Bulli Medical Practice

74 Park Road, Bulli NSW 2516

Monday to Friday 8am - 6pm

Saturdays 8am - 12 noon

Closed Sundays.

If you need a doctor outside of hours, call:  
Wollongong Radio Doctors 4228 5522  
or the GP Helpline 1800 022 222.

In an emergency call 000.

New patients always welcome!

**Book online today:**

**[bullimedicalpractice.com.au](http://bullimedicalpractice.com.au)  
or call 4284 4622.**



**Bullimedicalpractice**

## Other Practice News

- ◇ Farewell to Chloe W who has left Bulli Medical Practice to pursue her teaching career. We wish Chloe W all the best for her future.
- ◇ Farewell to Chloe B who has left to pursue her nursing career. We wish Chloe B all the best for her future.
- ◇ Welcome to Dr Helen Jones who started in early February as a GP registrar.
- ◇ Dr Victoria Beyer is on maternity leave.
- ◇ The practice will be closed over the Easter long weekend from Friday 29th March to Monday 1st April inclusive.

## Reminders, Recalls & Results

Please telephone the Practice after 10am weekdays to find out the results of any tests that have been ordered by our doctors.

Patients that require immediate action in relation to test results will be contacted by the Practice to arrange a consultation so that they can discuss the test results with a doctor.

We are committed to providing preventative health care and participate in government reminder systems and registers.

We offer a SMS reminder system. If you would like to receive SMS reminders please inform reception and ensure they have your current mobile telephone number. If you do not wish to be a part of this system, please notify reception.

## Feedback & Continuous Improvement

We value your feedback and encourage you to complete a general feedback form (which you can deposit in the secure box at reception) or by emailing [feedback@bullimedicalpractice.com.au](mailto:feedback@bullimedicalpractice.com.au).

We endeavour to respond to your suggestions as soon as possible and to continuously improve our service. From time to time we might also ask you to complete a confidential evaluation as part of AGPAL accreditation.

If you are unhappy with any aspect of the care that you receive then please let us know. Talk to either your doctor or reception staff and we will try our best to help. We believe problems are best resolved within the Practice as this helps us to continuously improve.

If however, the problem is not resolved, you may wish to contact the NSW state government authority for dealing with medical complaints. The address is:

- Health Care Complaints Commission  
Locked Bag 18, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012.