

Bowel cancer awareness by Dr Michael Hanson

Bowel cancer, also known as colorectal cancer, develops from the inner lining of the bowel and is usually preceded by growths called polyps.

An estimated 15,300 people were diagnosed with bowel cancer in 2023, making it the fourth most commonly diagnosed cancer in Australia.

Risk Factors

The risk of developing bowel cancer increases from the age of 50.

Bowel cancer risk is increased by smoking, eating a diet low in fibre, high red meat consumption especially processed meat, drinking alcohol, and being overweight or obese.

Family history also influences bowel cancer risk, as does inflammatory bowel disease such as Crohn's disease.

Symptoms

During the early stages, most patients have no symptoms and so screening over the age of 50 is very important. Symptoms can include:

- Blood in the stool/rectal bleeding
- A recent, persistent change in bowel habit, especially if severe (including diarrhoea, constipation or the feeling of incomplete emptying)
- A change in the appearance or consistency of bowel movements such as thin bowel stools
- Abdominal pain or swelling
- Pain or a lump in the anus or rectum
- Unexplained tiredness as a result of loss of blood (anaemia)
- Blood in urine (dark, rusty or brown colour) or passing urine frequently or during the night.

Screening and diagnosis

The average age at diagnosis is 69 years old. People aged 50-74 are sent a bowel screening test every two years as part of the National Bowel Cancer screen program.

If you have any concerns about your risk, or are experiencing any of the symptoms listed previously, see your doctor. Your GP will perform a physical examination and may order tests or refer you for a colonoscopy.

People from families with a history of bowel cancer need extra testing to find bowel cancers early which might include regular colonoscopies.

For more information visit:

- Bowel Cancer Australia <https://www.bowelcanceraustralia.org/>
- Cancer Council <https://www.cancer.org.au/>

7 ways to reduce your risk of bowel cancer



Eat wholegrains and naturally high-fibre foods.



Be physically active as part of everyday life.



Participate in bowel cancer screening.



Limit red and avoid processed meats.



If you choose to drink alcohol, limit the amount.



Avoid weight gain and increases in waist circumference.



Quit smoking.

SUPPORT #BOWELCANCERAUSTRALIA

Thyroid awareness by Dr Helen Maclean

What is the thyroid gland?

The thyroid gland is in the front of the neck on either side of your trachea (windpipe). It is responsible for making thyroid hormones (known as T3 and T4) which are vital hormones for your body's growth and development, and for managing/regulating metabolism. The thyroid gland is controlled by parts of your brain known as the hypothalamus and pituitary gland.

Thyroid conditions

People can have an underactive gland (hypothyroidism) or an overactive gland (hyperthyroidism). Thyroid disorders are common, but it is estimated over 1 million Australians are currently living with an undiagnosed thyroid condition.

The most common cause of underactive thyroid is an autoimmune condition known as Hashimoto's thyroiditis. This is particularly common in women and can present with various symptoms including fatigue, constipation, cold intolerance and hair thinning.

The most common form of overactive thyroid is an autoimmune condition known as Graves' disease. Common symptoms include weight loss, anxiety, palpitations and high blood pressure.

Both conditions are readily diagnosable and treatable. Iodine is a crucial requirement in our diets to maintain healthy thyroid function. Iodine deficiency is increasing in Australia, so supplementation is important in certain populations like pregnant and breast-feeding women (due to increased demands).

Another thyroid condition is congenital hypothyroidism, where a newborn has either an absent/small or under functioning

thyroid gland. This is screened for, as part of the newborn screening test, but can lead to significant growth and development issues in the infant if undetected. Thyroid cancer is increasing in Australia but is generally treatable and has a good prognosis.

In summary, thyroid conditions are common and present with a variety of symptoms, but in general, are very treatable. If you notice any lumps in the front of your neck or feel you may have any of the symptoms outlined above, please ask your GP for a thyroid check.



Farewells

Bek L (pictured above with Drs John Deady and Mike Hanson) has left to pursue her nursing career. Bek worked at the practice for the past two years whilst completing her studies. We wish her all the very best for her future.

Farewell to Sofia Fairbrother, practice nurse, who was with the practice for nearly six years. We will miss Sofia's enthusiasm and expertise, and wish her the very best for the next chapter in her career.

Rebecca T (pictured below with Dr Berlinda Png) was with the practice for nearly two years. We will miss her experience and support at reception. Wishing her all the best with her next adventure.



Don't forget your flu vax and covid booster this winter

Vaccination for influenza is available and is free for people most vulnerable to serious illness from six months of age. For others, a private vaccine can be accessed for a charge of \$25.

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.

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 (ATAGI) 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 Covid booster depending on their circumstances. Ask your GP at your next appointment about your individual risk.

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 Winter 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 Beyer					✓	✓	✓	✓			
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
or call 4284 4622.**



Bullimedicalpractice

Other Practice News

Farewell to Bec L and Bec T from reception and to Sofia Fairbrother, practice nurse. See story on page 2.

Dr Victoria Beyer will return from maternity leave in July. She will be working two days per week and we are looking forward to having her back.

Bulli Medical Practice will be closed on Monday 10th June for the Kings Birthday holiday.

A new GP registrar, Dr Elliott Wichlinski is, starting in August. More details to come in the Spring newsletter.

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.

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.