Illawarra Medical Services

Winnima Way, Berkeley 2506
Phone 4271 1899. Fax 4271 2602

Awarded Highly commended Practice of the Year 2012

health news

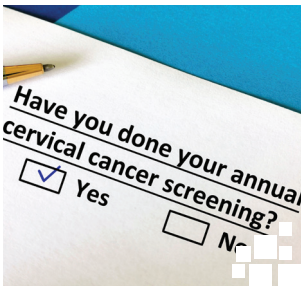
FEBRUARY - MARCH 2026 EDITION

FREE TO TAKE HOME!

Shingles Vaccination

Christmas Kilos

Back-to-School Health



Cervical Cancer Screening

YOUR NEXT APPOINTMENT:

ENJOY THIS FREE NEWSLETTER

Please remember that decisions about medical care should be made in consultation with your health care provider so discuss with your doctor before acting on any of the information.
www.healthnews.net.au

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• PRACTICE DOCTORS

Dr Myrna Jover
MD, FRACGP
Awarded GP of the Year 2012 Illawarra/Shoalhaven Area

Dr Neill Jover
MD, FRACGP

Dr Verman De La Cruz
MD, FRACGP

Dr Gary Fisher
MBBS, FRACGP D.(Obst), RCOG, Dip.RACOG

Dr Michael Petinga
MBBS, FRACGP

Dr Jamie Mercado
MBBS

Dr Michelle Medenilla
MBBS

Dr Samia Shawkat
MBBS

Dr Adeel Siddiqi
MBBS

Dr Priya Shroff
MD, FRACGP

• PRACTICE NURSES

Margaret, Matthew, Cherry, Debbie & Nicole

• RECEPTION STAFF

Krystal, Melinda, Vanessa, Cherry, Robin, Debbie & Michelle

• SURGERY HOURS

Monday – Friday..... 8am – 6pm
Saturday .....8am - 12pm
Sun & Public Hols..... Closed

• AFTER HOURS & EMERGENCY

For after hours consultations call:
Wollongong Radio Doctor:
4228 5522

In case of a emergency dial: **000**

• BILLING ARRANGEMENTS

Mixed Biling Practice.

Please bring your Medicare and concession cards to your appointment.

Private medicals are charged at AMA rates.

Payment at the time of consultation for non-Medicare card holders can be made by cash or EFT.

▷ ***Please see the Rear Cover for more practice information.***

• SPECIAL PRACTICE NOTES

Our practice philosophy is to provide thoughtful medical care to families by keeping up-to-date with medical innovations and bringing you efficient personal service.

Our practice **has been selected by the** University of Wollongong's Graduate School of Medicine to help train senior (phase 3) medical students. Each July a new student will join our practice team for a 12 month placement. The student will participate in the delivery of care to consenting patients under supervision. For example he or she may conduct a consultation, prior to the doctor's arrival. The student may complete a pre immunization check on children, administer influenza vaccinations over 65 year olds, take part in patient education and health screening, and be an extra pair of hands in emergencies.

Referrals. Doctors in this practice are competent at handling common health problems. When necessary, they can use opinions from specialists. You can discuss this openly with your doctor.

Patient Feedback. We would like to hear about your concerns, complaints or suggestions. Please feel free to talk to your GP or the Practice Manager regarding any issues. If you prefer to make your concerns known outside the surgery, you can call the Health Care Complaints Commission on **(02) 9219 7444 or 1800 043 159.**

Telephone advice. Most problems are best dealt with in consultation. A doctor is available during normal surgery hours for **emergency** advice. Our staff are experienced in deciding the appropriate response to any phone request.

Test results. It is your responsibility to ensure you follow-up test results, particularly when practice staff or your doctor stress that you do this. Ask reception staff about the best way to go about it.

Despite our best intentions, we sometimes run late! This is because someone has needed unexpected urgent attention. Thank you for your consideration.

• APPOINTMENTS

Consultation is by appointment. Urgent cases are seen on the day.

ONLINE APPOINTMENTS AVAILABLE. Please visit our practice at **www.imsberkeley.com.au** or the Hotdoc website.

Home Visits. Doctors at this practice make home visits at their discretion.

Booking a long appointment. This is important for more complex problems – insurance medical, health review, counselling, a second opinion. Please bring all relevant information. Please notify us if you are unable to attend an appointment, well in advance. If more than one person from your family wishes to see the doctor at the same time, please ensure a separate appointment is made for each family member.

AGPAL

This is a family owned AGPAL Accredited Practice.

We provide a comprehensive family medical service – quality care in a friendly, relaxed atmosphere.

Practice doctors are experienced in a broad range of health problems affecting all age groups.

Shingles Vaccination (Shingrix) & Dementia: What We Know

Shingrix is one of the leading shingles (herpes zoster) vaccines in Australia and is recommended for older adults to prevent shingles and its complications. Shingles is caused by reactivation of the varicella-zoster virus, which remains dormant in the body after childhood chickenpox. While shingles is best known for causing a painful rash, growing research suggests it may also have broader impacts on long-term brain health.

Recent international studies have observed an association between shingles infection and an increased risk of cognitive decline and dementia. Chronic inflammation and viral effects on the nervous system are thought to play a role. Interestingly, emerging evidence indicates that people who receive a shingles vaccine, particularly Shingrix, may have a lower risk of developing dementia compared with those who are unvaccinated. While this research does not yet prove direct cause and effect, the findings are encouraging.

Shingrix works by boosting the immune system's ability to keep the virus suppressed, reducing the chance of shingles occurring in the first place. By preventing shingles and the inflammation it can cause, vaccination may indirectly support long-term brain health.

Importantly, Shingrix is already recommended because it is highly effective at preventing shingles and post-herpetic neuralgia. Any potential added benefit for dementia prevention is an added reason to discuss vaccination with your GP.

If you are aged 65 years and over or 50 and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders then speak with your GP about your eligibility for a free vaccine.

Shedding the Christmas Kilos

The festive season is a time for celebration, good food, and relaxation, but it can also lead to a few extra kilos. The good news is that shedding Christmas weight doesn't require extreme dieting or intense exercise. Small, consistent changes can make a big difference.

Start by getting back into regular movement. Walking, swimming, cycling, or light gym sessions are excellent ways to burn calories and boost energy, especially during the warmer summer months. Aim for at least 30 minutes of activity most days of the week.

Next, focus on balanced eating rather than restriction. Fill your plate with vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains, and fresh fruit. Reducing portion sizes, limiting sugary drinks, and cutting back on alcohol can significantly lower calorie intake without feeling deprived.

Hydration is also key. Drinking plenty of water helps control appetite and supports metabolism. Finally, be patient with yourself. Healthy weight loss takes time, and sustainable habits are far more effective than quick fixes.

By easing back into routine and making mindful choices, those Christmas kilos will gradually disappear.

Back-to-School Health & Immunity

As February marks the return to school across Australia, many families notice a familiar pattern: busy mornings, close contact with classmates, and the spread of common colds and bugs. Supporting children's health and immunity at the start of the school year can help reduce illness and keep them feeling their best.

A strong immune system starts with the basics. Adequate sleep is essential, particularly as children adjust back into school routines. Establishing consistent bedtimes helps support immune function, concentration, and mood. Nutrition also plays a key role. Balanced meals that include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and dairy provide important vitamins and minerals such as vitamin C, zinc, and iron, which support immune health. Packing a nutritious lunchbox can make a big difference to energy levels throughout the day.

Good hygiene habits are another crucial line of defence. Encouraging regular hand washing with soap and water—especially before eating and after using the bathroom—helps limit the spread of germs. Teaching children to cover coughs and sneezes and to avoid sharing drink bottles can further reduce transmission of illness.

Staying physically active supports overall health and immunity, but it's equally important to allow time for rest. After-school downtime helps children recover from busy days and prevents burnout. Keeping vaccinations up to date is also an important step in protecting children and the wider school community.

By focusing on sleep, nutrition, hygiene, and routine, families can help children transition smoothly back to school and build resilience for a healthy year ahead.

The Importance of Cervical Screening with Your GP

Cervical screening is one of the most effective ways to protect women's health, yet many people delay or avoid it due to uncertainty or discomfort. Regular cervical screening with your GP plays a vital role in preventing cervical cancer and detecting potential problems early, when they are easiest to treat.

Cervical screening tests look for human papillomavirus (HPV), a common virus that can cause changes to cervical cells over time. Most people will have HPV at some stage in their lives, often without knowing it. In many cases the virus clears on its own, but in some women it can lead to abnormal cell changes that, if left untreated, may progress to cancer. Screening helps identify these changes long before symptoms appear.

Seeing your GP for cervical screening also provides an opportunity for personalised care. Your doctor can explain the test, address concerns, and ensure you feel comfortable throughout the process. They can also discuss your individual risk factors, screening intervals, and any follow-up that may be needed. For many women, reassurance and clear information from a trusted GP can make a significant difference in attending regular screening.

Importantly, cervical cancer is one of the most preventable cancers. Regular screening has been shown to dramatically reduce both the incidence of cervical cancer and deaths from the disease. Even if you feel healthy, have no symptoms, or have received the HPV vaccine, screening remains essential.

Prioritising cervical screening is a simple but powerful step toward long-term health. Booking an appointment with your GP could truly be life-saving.

Spirulina: A Nutrient-Dense Superfood

Spirulina is a blue-green algae that has gained popularity as a natural health supplement due to its impressive nutritional profile. Available as a powder or tablet, spirulina is rich in protein, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants, making it a convenient addition to a balanced diet.

One of spirulina's key benefits is its high protein content, containing all essential amino acids. This makes it particularly appealing for people following vegetarian or plant-based diets. It is also a good source of iron, B vitamins, magnesium, and iodine, nutrients that support energy levels, muscle function, and overall wellbeing.

Spirulina is well known for its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties, largely due to a compound called phycocyanin. Antioxidants help protect cells from oxidative stress, which is linked to ageing and many chronic diseases. Some studies suggest spirulina may support immune function, improve cholesterol levels, and assist with blood sugar control when combined with healthy lifestyle habits.

Additionally, spirulina may help combat fatigue and support recovery after exercise. It is often added to smoothies or juices, although its strong taste may take some getting used to.

As with any supplement, spirulina should be used responsibly. It's best to discuss its use with your GP, particularly if you are pregnant, immunocompromised, or taking medications.

SPIRULINA BLISS BALLS

These no-bake spirulina bliss balls are quick to make, naturally sweet, and perfect for a healthy snack or lunchbox treat.

Ingredients (Makes ~12 balls):

- 1 cup rolled oats
- ½ cup pitted dates
- 2 tablespoons almond butter or peanut butter
- 1 tablespoon chia seeds
- 1 tablespoon shredded coconut (plus extra for rolling)
- ½ teaspoon spirulina powder
- 1–2 tablespoons water (as needed)
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract (optional)

Method:

1. Place the rolled oats and dates into a food processor and pulse until finely chopped.
2. Add nut butter, chia seeds, coconut, spirulina, and vanilla.
3. Process until the mixture begins to stick together. Add water gradually if the mixture is too dry.
4. Roll tablespoon-sized portions into balls.
5. Roll in extra coconut if desired.
6. Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes to firm up.

Serving & Storage

Store in an airtight container in the fridge for up to one week, or freeze for up to one month.

Why You'll Love Them

Spirulina adds antioxidants and plant-based protein, while oats and dates provide lasting energy. The sweetness of dates balances spirulina's earthy flavour, making these bliss balls both nutritious and delicious.

WORD SEARCH

G	I	S	C	N	U	T	R	I	T	I	O	N	N
M	H	P	Y	G	I	I	G	L	E	R	N	N	N
I	S	I	C	I	M	M	U	N	E	E	X	H	L
R	E	R	L	E	C	E	P	T	R	L	O	M	H
C	L	U	I	A	Y	G	A	I	I	G	E	M	N
S	G	L	N	G	O	W	E	G	L	H	I	M	T
H	N	I	G	L	I	E	S	L	E	E	P	A	E
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R	E	G	I	I	I	L	L	L	O	U	A	G	C
I	I	R	G	L	V	Y	O	A	M	O	U	A	I
X	U	S	C	R	E	E	N	I	N	G	L	I	M
X	H	U	M	A	N	N	N	I	E	T	O	R	P

SLEEP
HYGIENE
WATER
NUTRITION
SCHOOL
SPIRULINA
VIRAL
PROTEIN
IMMUNE
SCREENING
CYCLING
SHINGLES
ALGAE
SHINGRIX
HUMAN

- **OTHER SERVICES**
- Accident & Emergency Care
- Antenatal Care
- Dietitian
- Berkeley Pharmacy next door
- Clinical Psychologist
- Podiatrist
- Women & Men's Health
- Mental Health
- Immunisation
- Medicals e.g. Driving, Seaman's
- Exercise Physiologist
- Psychologist
- Pathology on site
- Physiotherapist
- Minor Surgery
- Wheelchair access is available
- Skin Cancer Clinic – e.g. Mole check
- Aged Care Facilities – we visit the local nursing homes and hostels
- Travel Medicine (Accredited Yellow Fever Vaccination Centre)

- **SPECIAL PRACTICE NOTES**

Medical record confidentiality. This practice protects your personal health information to ensure it is only available to authorised staff members for the intended purposes and to comply with the Privacy Act.

Reminder system. Because our practice is committed to preventive care, we may send you an occasional reminder regarding health services appropriate to your care. If you wish to opt out of this, please let us know.

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