

## STRESS

We all know what it is like to experience stress, and we usually have a pretty good idea of the kinds of things that seem to generate it (which are termed stressors). Trying to create a stress-free life would be both unrealistic and undesirable, since stress is associated with work, family and personal relationships. In fact stress is associated with nearly all the changes and challenges that enable us to develop, adapt and make our way successfully through life!

Some stress is actually quite beneficial to us, because it can generate energy, alertness and motivation for a while range of tasks. The problem arises when we experience too much stress at one time or experience significant stress for a prolonged period of time. Severe or prolonged stress can have quite negative effects: it is associated with increased risk for many health problems—including some mental health problems.

Here is just a quick list:

- reflux, hyperacidity, heartburn, irritable bowel syndrome
- ulcers, diarrhoea, constipation, indigestion
- high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke
- bladder infection, high cholesterol, asthma, allergies
- immune system related disorders, skin diseases
- cold and infections, muscle pain and spasm
- cancer, neurodegenerative disorders
- fatigue, anxiety, depression, insomnia
- alcohol and drug misuse and dependence

Stress is far from being "all in the mind" since stressful events can trigger a whole series of biochemical changes in the body that are experienced physically as well as psychologically. And though the effects of stress differ from person to person, none of us are immune; no matter how "easy going" we are, one day it could affect us profoundly, especially if we are confronted by an unfamiliar and particularly difficult situation, which we do not have the coping resources to deal with.

Stress can be managed, it can be reduced and it can be kept at a level that is useful rather than harmful.

Those strategies most effective at switching off the fight or flight response are:

- relaxation    - structured problem solving    - normal sleep
- adopting a constructive mental pattern (revising how we interpret and make sense of life events)
- reducing alcohol and caffeine    - making healthy choices

## SKIN CLINICS

Due to patient demand and recent media exposure, skin cancer checks have become increasingly popular again. These specific clinics are held on every 3rd Thursday afternoon—please ask at reception if interested. It is equivalent in cost to a longer appointment—currently \$120 but there may be additional costs if liquid nitrogen, or photography is done. The clinics are fully booked for 2009—but depending on demand we may offer them fortnightly in January and February 2010.

## NEW PHONE SYSTEM

ASFMC has installed a new phone system to better streamline the information we wish to pass onto patients as well as free up receptionist time. We are still in the teething stages and value any feedback regarding patient's experience with the new phone system. There is now absolutely no excuse to not be aware of our consistent "Do not Attend" fee which has been in place since we opened our doors in Sept 2006. This is still costing us many thousands of dollars but more importantly limiting our already stretched capacity when patients are desperate for on-the-day appointments.

## WEBSITE PLANS

ASFMC Management is considering how best to improve the information we have on our website. We are hoping to include an e-mail version of the quarterly newsletter, as well as being able to e-mail invitations to upcoming "flu clinics in March 2010" or other health topics of interest. If you have any ideas or contributions that might be helpful please e-mail Susie our practice manager at [admin@alicefamilymedical.com.au](mailto:admin@alicefamilymedical.com.au). We are hoping to use the quieter time over the holiday period to dedicate some much needed time to the website upgrade.



**ALICE SPRINGS FAMILY  
MEDICAL CENTRE**

## NEWSLETTER 12/09

As we head towards the end of 2009 Alice Springs Family Medical Centre would like to wish all patients and their families a great X'mas and relaxing break over the New Year Period (if you are lucky enough to be having one!!). Due to reception staffing issues we have had to close earlier recently and do apologise for any inconvenience. Our hours over the Holiday Period will be as follows:

No Sat morning clinics on 19/12, 26/12, 2/1

Thurs 24th Dec — close at 1400hrs

Friday 25th Dec —closed (public holiday)

Monday 28th Dec—closed (public holiday)

Thurs 31st Dec— close at 1400hrs

Friday 1st Jan—closed (public holiday).

**Please respect the no smoking policy on the entire grounds of the clinic. I am sick of picking up butts!! The signage cannot be clearer.**



## ALICE SPRINGS FAMILY MEDICAL CENTRE

17 Stuart Highway  
PO Box 4246  
Alice Springs NT 0871

Phone: 08 8952 7774  
Fax: 08 8952 6774

- E-mail: [admin@alicefamilymedical.com.au](mailto:admin@alicefamilymedical.com.au)  
Website: [www.alicefamilymedical.com.au](http://www.alicefamilymedical.com.au)

Proud to be working with the community  
to improve Central Australian Health

**17 Stuart Highway  
Entrance off Kekwick Ave  
Parking at rear  
Phone 08 8952 7774 ALL HOURS**



## SWINE FLU "MINI CLINICS"

Due to patient demand ASFMIC will offer a mini swine flu vaccination clinic every Friday morning from 08:15—09:15hrs only starting on 27/11/09. We will only continue to provide this type of clinic while the demand is there—anticipating not doing it over the X'mas period due to staffing issues. If our clinic is full or if you cannot attend on Friday mornings the CDC (Centre for Disease Control) is also running regular clinics. The clinic is being held at the Alice Springs Hospital Mon-Fri 9am – 4pm. Please call CDC on **8951 7540** to make an appointment.

The H1N1 vaccine comes in a multidose vial that contains 10 adult doses—it is fully funded by the government and has been available since mid October in Alice Springs. The usual fluax contains 3 different strains of influenza whereas this is just a stand alone strain. If you are considering getting the swine flu vaccine we would strongly advocate considering getting the annual fluax, which continues to provide 3 different strains every year. This is funded is you are aged >65 yrs or < 50 yrs if ATSI—otherwise is privately costs \$22 at ASFMIC.

## TRAVEL ADVICE

ASFMIC has joined "Travel Medicine Alliance" to gain better access to travel resources for our patients. We stock most routine vaccines and can dispense directly from the clinic usually at a lower cost than a private script to the chemist. ASFMIC is an accredited yellow fever vaccine provider. We would recommend planning to touch base **at least one month before** any planned overseas travel. Please bring any previous vaccination records with you so we can update your file.

**We stock travel first aid kits and medication kits to facilitate safer travel.**  
**Due to increasing complexity of travel destinations and the time it takes to give correct and up-to-date advice ASFMIC would strongly recommend a longer appointment.**  
We may trial "travel medicine" clinics every 3rd Thursday, similar to the skin clinics. This will free up Dr Mitchell and Susie our practice nurse to better utilise the time available and give complete medical care. Travel advice is more than an injection!!!

Insomnia occurs quite commonly—survey studies often find about a third of all adults report difficulty with sleeping at some point in the year prior. About 10% of patients report that the problem in severe or chronic. Sleep hygiene refers to a set of factors that are required for maintenance of a normal sleep-wake cycle. Sleep hygiene recommendations have varied over the years, but common examples include maintenance of a regular sleep-wake schedule, limiting use of caffeine and alcohol, avoiding naps, eliminating noise and light from the sleep environment and not looking at the clock during the night. Poor sleep make you more vulnerable to certain medical conditions—and vice versa,

**GOOD SLEEPING HABITS**  
Try to go to bed and wake up around the same time everyday. Your body has a natural clock that makes you get sleepy when you're ready for bed. Getting up at the same time will help keep your body clock synchronised

Try to get regular exercise everyday  
Try to spend some time outside or in natural sunlight everyday. Sunlight is needed to make melatonin, a natural chemical inside your body which promotes sleep

Take any medicines as directed  
Try to make your bedroom as restful as possible. Keep it dark and quiet (leave beeping watches and noisy or bright alarm clocks in another room)  
Make sure you are comfortable and relaxed. Warm hands and feet are particularly important. You spend around eight hours a day sleeping so it is important to have a comfortable pillow and mattress

Avoid drinking tea or coffee before bed and avoid using alcohol  
Avoid exercise just before bed  
Avoid relying on sleeping tablets to help you sleep

Insomnia is present when a patient reports inadequate sleep quantity or quality in conjunction with daytime impairment attributed to deficient sleep. Typically, patients report difficulty with initiating sleep, with maintaining sleep, or with both.

Insomnia occurs quite commonly—survey studies often find about a third of all adults report difficulty with sleeping at some point in the year prior. About 10% of patients report that the problem in severe or chronic. Sleep hygiene refers to a set of factors that are required for maintenance of a normal sleep-wake cycle. Sleep hygiene recommendations have varied over the years, but common examples include maintenance of a regular sleep-wake schedule, limiting use of caffeine and alcohol, avoiding naps, eliminating noise and light from the sleep environment and not looking at the clock during the night. Poor sleep make you more vulnerable to certain medical conditions—and vice versa,

sometimes it is those medical conditions contributing to the poor sleep!!! If it is an issue consider mentioning it at your next visit with a GP??

## HELPING A FRIEND WITH DEPRESSION OR ANXIETY

Although your first reaction may be to tell someone who is down to "cheer up" because everything will be fine, this may come across as you are not taking them seriously and can make things worse. Ask Dr Mitchell's definition for "fine" one day!!

Finding out more about depression and anxiety might help you to better understand the reasons for the reactions you might receive and what your friend might be going through.

Even though you can offer support, you are not responsible for your friend's actions or behaviours. If they aren't willing to help themselves, it's **NOT** your fault. It might take time for your friend to accept help, either from you or someone else. It might also take time to find a treatment that works best for them.

If your friend doesn't want to talk to you about their problems, try not to take it personally. Sometimes it's easier to talk to someone you don't know about what's troubling you.  
Sometimes when you are worried about someone, it feels like you are all alone. It's important that you take care of yourself as well. Try to take time out to relax and enjoy things like sport, friends, music or going for a walk to keep yourself feeling OK.

**LOOK** for warning signs  
**LISTEN** without judging  
Take the time to **TALK** about what's going on  
And **SEEK HELP** together

www.youthbeyondblue.com 1300 22 4636  
Lifeline 13 11 14—cost of a local call  
Kid's Help Line 1800 55 1800 (freecall) 24/7—free  
www.headspace.org.au  
www.reachout.com