

HEALTH

matters

Digital detox?

How to achieve a healthy digital diet



DISASTER MEDIA COVERAGE

Supporting our children in times of disaster

HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The right care at the right time

BE MEDICINEWISE

Get the most out of your medicines

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Healthmatters is published by Teachers Federation Health Ltd. ABN 86 097 030 414 trading as Teachers Health Fund. A Registered Private Health Insurer.

HEAD OFFICE ADDRESS PHONE

Level 4, Tower A,
260 Elizabeth Street
Sydney, NSW 2000

OVERSEAS CALLERS

+61 2 8346 2111

MAILING ADDRESS

GPO Box 9812
Sydney, NSW 2001

FAX

1300 728 388

VISITING US IN PERSON EMAIL

35 Reservoir Street
Surry Hills, NSW 2010

healthmatters@teachershealth.com.au

68 Macquarie Street
Parramatta, NSW 2150

WEB

teachershealth.com.au

142 Beaumont Street
Hamilton, NSW 2303

52 Bridge Road
Richmond, Vic 3121

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healthmatters@teachershealth.com.au

Editor: Lauren Deering

Calendar

AUGUST 2016

- 22 – 28 Be MedicineWise Week - NPS Medicinewise
- 22 – 28 VCFS22q11.2 Awareness Week - supporting people affected by VCFS deletion 22q11.2
- 26 Pink and White for 22q Day

SEPTEMBER 2016

Dementia Awareness Month
Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

- 1 - 7 National Asthma Awareness Week
- 5 – 9 Women's Health Week
- 5 – 11 Idiopathic Hypersomnia Awareness Week
- 8 R U OK? Day
- 10 World Suicide Prevention Day

OCTOBER 2016

Schoctober – Defibrillator Awareness Month
Lupus Awareness Month
Polio Awareness Month
Dwarfism Awareness Month

- 3 Labour Day (Teachers Health Fund closed)
- 10 World Mental Health Day
- 15 Pregnancy & Infant Loss Awareness Day
- 20 World Osteoporosis Day
- 22 – 29 International Brain Tumour Awareness Week
- 23 SUDEP Awareness Day
- 23 – 29 International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week

The dates and events listed are major awareness days, weeks and months related to health and ageing. For further information, please visit health.gov.au and click on 'Calendar of Events'.

From the CEO



Welcome to the latest issue of Healthmatters. We have listened to our members and hope that you enjoy the new larger format and updated design. If you would like to hear more from Healthmatters electronically, simply opt in to receive the e-version of the magazine and we will email you with each new issue.

Teachers Health Fund is proud of the work we do to support the education community through grants, sponsorships, scholarships and health and wellbeing programs. In this issue we hear from Teachers Health Fund scholarship recipient, Jocelyn Brewer who updates us on the concept of 'Digital Nutrition' following her study tour of the USA. We also bring you news of just a few of the recipients who have benefited from our School Staff Health and Wellbeing Grants Program in collaboration with the NSW Department of Education.

I am also pleased to tell you about the quality, evidence-based health management programs and services available to our members. We are passionate about your health and wellbeing and understand that navigating healthcare services and providers can be a daunting experience. The programs offered include education and support and can help you to achieve positive health outcomes at any stage of life.

We hear from the Trauma and Grief Network who give us vital information on how to support children and students when seeing coverage of disasters in the media. Ahead of this month's Be Medicinewise Week, NPS MedicineWise remind us to consider the medicines we take and how to ensure we get the most out of them.

Please check the Noticeboard on page 13 for important news and information from the Fund, including a reminder about our Online Members Services portal and mobile claiming for simple and convenient claiming.

As always, your feedback is appreciated so please contact us on healthmatters@teachershealth.com.au with any suggestion for your Fund's magazine.

Thank you for your continued support of the only health fund exclusively for the education community.

Yours sincerely,

Brad Joyce

Brad Joyce, CEO

PREFER TO RECEIVE HEALTHMATTERS ELECTRONICALLY?

Opt in to receive the e-version of Healthmatters and we'll email you when a new issue is available. Visit the 'Members' area of our website and, once you're logged in, simply click on 'Contact Details', check your email address is up to date and tick 'yes' for consent. It's that easy!

For more information:
teachershealth.com.au/members

RIO 2016 – GOOD LUCK, KURT!

Everyone at Teachers Health Fund would like to wish Paralympian and Teachers Health Fund Ambassador, Kurt Fearnley the best of luck at next month's Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. We'll all be supporting you!

For more information:
paralympic.org.au
kurtfearnley.com

Twitter:
[@kurtfearnley](https://twitter.com/kurtfearnley)

SPREAD THE WORD

If you love our amazing benefits and services, then your family and friends probably will too! Don't forget, as well as colleagues, eligible members can refer a partner, children, siblings, grandchildren and parents! Eligibility criteria apply.

For more information:
teachershealth.com.au/spreadtheword

Disaster media coverage and children

Television, radio and the internet bring coverage of disasters into our homes every day. The Trauma and Grief Network (TGN) explains how parents and teachers can help children to cope with this.

Media coverage during times of disaster is important. Whether it be a natural disaster, violence or war, television, radio and the internet can help to provide vital news and information. However, the media often focus on the most frightening aspects of a disaster and use powerful and sometimes disturbing images. Children can become absorbed by the constant news stream about the disaster and may find it distressing and overwhelming. Parents and teachers need to be mindful of how much exposure a child has to media covering disasters and help them to understand and cope with what they see and hear.

Overall it's important that children feel safe at home and at school after seeing coverage of a disaster.

The impact of disaster media coverage on children can vary depending on many things including individual characteristics of the child (such as temperament, age and developmental stage), the nature of the disaster, any pre-existing vulnerabilities and the quality and timeliness of support they receive. Initial reactions often include shock, fear, being upset and a feeling of not being able to make sense of their world. They may think a lot about the disaster, which can impact on their sleep and time

at school, can become hyper alert, wary, distant and disconnected and worried or anxious that the same sort of disaster may happen to them or their family. Children may also feel unsafe in their relationships, the physical or social environment and may experience separation problems, emotional and behavioral changes, nightmares and become cynical or over protective. The effects may settle quickly for some, while for others their reactions may last longer but the more media coverage they see, the more likely that they will become afraid or upset.

WHAT CAN PARENTS AND TEACHERS DO?

After seeing coverage of a disaster, it's important for children and young people to regain a sense of emotional and physical safety, for them to feel protected from the powerful and confronting forces of the traumatic events seen in the media. Being comforted and calmed will limit the potential damaging effects of the coverage. The maintenance of strong and supportive, trusted and safe primary relationships, including parents, extended family and teachers, are vital in helping children and young people to cope with what they may have seen. Support requires patience and understanding.

▪ **Restrict the amount of time that they are able to watch TV or internet coverage** of the disaster and distract them from the coverage and other people's conversations regarding the coverage if necessary.

▪ **Make sure that you are there with them** when they are watching coverage of a disaster and encourage them to talk about their fears. Ask them how they are feeling and what they are thinking – sometimes their concerns are not what you might expect. Do not force discussion if a child is unwilling to talk, they may come back to you later when they want to talk. It's also important to be aware that it can be a sign that children are not coping well if they are talking about the event regularly.

▪ **Answer any questions that they have** to help them understand what has happened and why. Answer questions factually, clearly and concisely (and age appropriately) and if you do not have information, say so. Do not give false assurance that such events will never happen again.

▪ **Acknowledge their feelings of fear** and other emotions and remind them that they are safe, that you are with them and that you will look after them.

▪ **Support the child if they are upset** and comfort them with normal comforting actions such as cuddling, stroking, holding hands and sitting together. Quiet conversation and singing can also help to reassure them that they will be okay.

▪ **Reassure the child that their thoughts, feelings and reactions are normal.** Accept the child's responses and don't tell them to 'be brave' or 'stop being silly'.

▪ **Remind them that there are also lots of good things happening in the world** (though these do not always receive the same amount of coverage), highlight positive aspects of hope, resilience and courage and keep an optimistic view.

▪ **Enjoy some extra fun activities to remind them of normal life.**

Remember, children will also often discuss what they have seen in the media with each other so, even though a child may not be seeing it on TV at home, they are still exposed to it. Ask them what they have heard from others and discuss it to avoid rumours and incorrect information from peers.

Overall it's important to ensure that children and young people feel safe at home and at school after seeing coverage of a disaster. Talking to children and re-establishing and maintaining their familiar environments and routines around sleeping, eating and regular activities will help them to feel safe and secure and to regain trust in people and their wider world. Monitor their reactions and feel confident to seek and accept support and guidance from a qualified and experienced infant, child or adolescent specialist or your family doctor if you're concerned about ongoing physical signs, worries or fears.

The Trauma and Grief Network (TGN) connects families, carers and members of the community to resources focused on the care of children and adolescents affected by the impact of trauma, loss and grief and aims to reduce the mental health risks faced by children and adolescents by providing information and support. For more information, visit tgn.anu.edu.au

Health and wellbeing programs and services



Teachers Health Fund provides you with more than simply health insurance. We've listened to our members and understand your concerns that navigating healthcare services and providers can be a daunting experience. The programs and services we offer bring you the right care at the right time.

To further support your health and wellbeing, we give eligible members access to quality, evidence-based health management programs and services. We're determined to ensure that the very best quality healthcare is received and positive health outcomes are achieved at any life stage and at no additional cost.

SUPPORT FOR ELIGIBLE MEMBERS INCLUDES:

▪ **coordinated care and organised health activities** to ensure that the right care, tailored to individual needs, is received at the right time

▪ **education and support** to empower you to overcome the day-to-day challenges associated with chronic and complex health conditions

▪ **access to trusted resources and services** that are designed to help you with your healthcare needs and promote independence



NEW FAMILY

Starting a family is an exciting time but it can be challenging. Our New Family program has been developed in collaboration with early childhood experts, Safe Sleep Space & Nourish Perinatal Wellness to provide support during the first few months of life with a newborn. The innovative program provides practical information and support on a range of early parenting and settling matters.



WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

Do you need help in achieving and maintaining your personal weight goals? We recognise the importance of a healthy lifestyle and its role in disease management and prevention and will work with you to achieve this. Our range of weight management programs are designed to help our members to learn the lifestyle skills necessary to achieve healthy and realistic weight management.



REHABILITATION AT HOME

The privacy of your own home can be a priceless support during rehabilitation. Through the Rehabilitation at Home program, eligible members who have approval from their treating doctor will receive rehabilitation services from health professionals in the comfort of their own home.



DIABETES MANAGEMENT

Living with a chronic disease such as diabetes can be difficult but it can be made easier with support. The Diabetes Management program is designed to help members with either type 1, type 2, gestational diabetes or pre-diabetes to manage their health and learn lifestyle skills to live the best life possible. Advice and support from a credentialed diabetes educator, an accredited practising dietitian and an accredited exercise physiologist are available to empower members participating in the program to adopt a healthy lifestyle and avoid, or minimise, potential short and long-term complications.



RESIDENTIAL CARE

Finding the right residential aged care facility can be a complex and daunting process. At such an emotional time, it's easy to be confused by the range of options available. To assist our members during this time, we offer our members the support of a dedicated aged care consultant to help you understand your options, make informed decisions and find the right residential aged-care facility.



HOSPITAL CARE AT HOME

We understand that hospital stays can be stressful and reducing the length of a stay can be beneficial to your wellbeing. Under the guidance of your hospital medical team, you can receive hospital care at home, including wound and medication management and selected home nursing interventions.

▪ Programs and services brought to members through Teachers Healthcare Services, an initiative of Teachers Health Fund. For more information, contact Teachers Health Fund on info@teachershealth.com.au or call **1300 727 538**.

ONLINE RESOURCES

With so much health and medical information available on the internet, it can be hard to know what information you can trust. The team at Teachers Healthcare Services has put together some online resources to provide you with trusted health and wellbeing information on topics that we know impact many members. Visit teachershealth.com.au



Why we need digital nutrition not 'digital detoxes'

Following her 'Digital Nutrition' study tour of the USA, we touched base with Jocelyn Brewer, recipient of the 2014 Premier's Teachers Health Fund Health Education Scholarship, to hear more about what makes up a 'healthy digital diet'.



2015 was a big year for research and debate about our use of digital technology, its role in education and what makes up a 'healthy digital diet', especially when it comes to the impact on young minds. As I discussed in my Healthmatters article last year, as teachers it's impossible to ignore the way that digital technology has not

the myriad of issues relating to the way that technology is shaping behaviour, society and learning. Digital Nutrition is about reclaiming the way we think about our digital world and technology habits – rather than it being about restriction or detoxing (which gives the sense that it's somewhat poisonous), it's about proactively designing a

– those best consumed less often and with an understanding of the impacts of over-eating.

HOW CAN PARENTS AND TEACHERS SUPPORT DIGITALLY NUTRITIOUS LIVES FOR TEENS?

I encourage parents and educators to refrain from perpetuating the sense there is a divide between young people's use of technology and their own – recent research actually shows that Australian teens' technological skills are falling behind! There is a big difference between young people being able to use social media skilfully and having the high level skills required in a 21st century economy (like coding and data management). Sure, some adults don't have the skills and might not 'get' how to use technology (nor why it's so important to young people) but this is an opportunity to connect and communicate about the experiences and capabilities that young people have online. Giving people choices and guidance on how to shape their online worlds is important, empowering young people with information and knowledge

to keep themselves safe is a key to effective learning.

Schools and parents need to work co-operatively to provide the guidelines and information on how to use technology and online activities in ways that contribute to their learning and wellbeing. Importantly, adults should be aware of the way that their own use of technology is role modelled to young people and keep a check of their own technology habits and behaviours. The American Academy of Paediatrics abandoned their simplistic 'screentime' prescriptions in favour of more dynamic and descriptive principles for balanced technology use, many of which echoed the ideas underlying Digital Nutrition.

WHAT ARE THE 3M'S OF DIGITAL NUTRITION?

Think of these in the same way that you might think of healthy food, you know what healthy food looks like and you can tune in and notice when you're full (or if you've eaten too much). The same applies to developing the skills to recognise how what you look at and

think online impacts your feelings and other aspects of your life (like study).

The three key aspects of Digital Nutrition are mindful, meaningful and moderate.

MINDFUL in that you are present to your actions, you have awareness of and responsibility over your activities online and how these impact not just other aspects of your life but other people too.

MEANINGFUL in that you have a sense of purpose and clarity in regard to what you're reading, commenting on or participating in. The activities should contribute, even in a small way, to your goals and values.

MODERATE in that you're able to regulate and temper your habits and usage and avoid negative impacts across other aspects of your life. The activities are balanced and, like in Goldilocks, are done in amounts that are 'just right'!

It's not about good or bad. The digital world is complex and nuanced.

Again, it's not so much the network or platform you're using but the intention and goals of what you're using it for. Some 'junk food' on occasion is okay, but if eating the treat comes with guilt or negative thoughts then we need to consider those thoughts, not just the activity. To be able to do that we need to develop the ability to 'tune in' and be present to our feelings and think through positive and helpful ways to engage with activities online.

Increasingly there are better ways to credential and review the apps and games we use and the provision of more nuanced and qualified evaluations of, not just the popularity, but the social, emotional and cognitive skills which are required when using them. Sometimes young people really benefit from the input of the 'adult lens' being cast over the social media platforms they use in order to point out possible issues which might not create safe spaces or habits for young people.

To hear more from Jocelyn, including her full Premier's Teachers Health Fund Health Education Scholarship study tour and TEDx talk, visit jocelynbrewer.com

It's not about good or bad. The digital world is complex and nuanced.

only shaped the way we teach, but its capacity to captivate the attention of our students. However, there is an important component missing: teaching the soft skills required to mediate and moderate its use.

My Digital Nutrition study tour of the USA, funded by the Premier's Teachers Health Fund Health Education Scholarship, was well timed with the increasing demand in understanding and innovating our way of approaching

relationship with technology that is healthy and sustainable.

Digital Nutrition borrows from the thinking around food nutrition and what makes a balanced diet and applies these concepts to how we consume information and ideas digitally through our devices and social media. We can think of some online activities as being more 'nutritious' from a social, psychological and cognitive perspective and others being more like 'junk' foods

WHAT YOUR SEX CAN SAY ABOUT YOUR HEALTH



Life expectancy for Australian men is currently 80.3 years compared to 84.4 years for Australian women. We look at some of the factors that may shape the health of men and women.

Australian men and women share many health challenges. Nearly one in three are insufficiently active and only one in 20 meet the Australian Dietary Guidelines for recommended daily serves of both fruit and vegetables. However, men and women differ in patterns of illness, disease risk factors and access to and use of health services.

SUPPORT YOUR HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- A trusted and open relationship with your GP is critical to good health. Visit your GP annually for a check-up (or more if directed by your health professional). Visit the National Health Services Directory (nhsd.com.au) for a list GPs and other health services.
- Undertake regular at home/self-checking and if you notice any changes or have any concerns, speak to your doctor or health professional.
- See your doctor and other health professional for regular check-ups and age-appropriate screenings, health checks and immunisations – if you have a personal or family history, consult your doctor on frequency of screenings.

HEALTH SCREENINGS

WOMEN

- Pap tests: women aged 18-70 years who have been sexually active should have a pap test every two years, including those who have had the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. Women over 70 years who have had two normal pap tests in the five years before turning 70 can generally stop having pap tests but should be guided by their GP.
- Mammogram: women aged 50-69 years who do not have a

family history of breast cancer should have a mammogram every two years. Those with a family history of breast cancer should be guided by their GP. Women aged 40-49 are also eligible to receive free screening mammograms.

- Be breast aware – it's important to know what is normal for you because everyone is different. Women should check their breasts regularly and if they notice any changes, see their GP immediately.

MEN

- Prostate screening: screening for prostate cancer is not done routinely but men who have any concerns should speak to their GP.
- Testicular self-examination – men should know what their testes look and feel like and if they notice anything different, like lumps or pain, should see their GP immediately.

BOTH

- Skin, dental, optical, mental health, diabetes, immunisations, bone density, heart health, bowel health and dietary health (including weight and body measurements).

References: Australian Bureau of Statistics abs.gov.au, Australian Medical Association ama.com.au, Better Health Channel betterhealth.vic.gov.au, World Health Organisation who.int, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners raccgp.org.au, Andrology Australia andrologyaustralia.org

WOMEN

Women as a whole enjoy a longer life expectancy than men but in general they also report more episodes of ill health, consult medical practitioners and health professionals more frequently and take medication more often. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in women, with women aged 15 years and over more likely to be sedentary or engage in low levels of exercise than males of the same age.

Women's health needs may also differ at different times in their lives. Early childhood experiences, such as adolescent body image, can play a significant role in determining future mental health with pregnancy and the

postnatal period also times of mental health vulnerability.

Women's role as primary carers can also have a significant impact on their mental health and wellbeing with carers experiencing poorer physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing because of their caring responsibilities. Many carers neglect their own health care needs due to limited time or the ability to afford treatments.

Because they tend to live longer, women also represent a growing proportion of older people, with a corresponding burden of chronic disease and the tendency to live longer with a disability.

MEN

Reports suggest that Australian men are more likely to get sick from serious health problems than women. They are less inclined than women to take an active role in maintaining their health and are less likely to seek professional help for problems, particularly those of an emotional nature, with women aged between 25 and 34 twice as likely to visit a doctor than men of the same age. Consequently, men die in greater numbers than women from almost every non-sex specific health problem.

Males, particularly teenagers, are also more likely to consider themselves invulnerable and therefore

display destructive behaviours. While fewer Australians overall are consuming alcohol in risky quantities, men aged 18 and over are more than twice as likely to exceed recommend amounts than women. Likewise, proportionally more Australian men smoke daily than women.

One in six Australian men will suffer from depression at any given time with men more likely to resort to drug and alcohol abuse in an attempt to deal with it. Depression is also a known high-risk factor for suicide and Australian men of all ages suicide at a higher rate than women.

Introducing the Member Wellbeing Network

To support our members' health and wellbeing, our Member Wellbeing Network has been created to offer our members access to high quality care and a personalised service.

We have agreements with a range of partners giving members offers and discounts on Extras services, including No Gap offers.

To find out more visit teachershealth.com.au/members/find-a-provider/member-wellbeing-network



Member Wellbeing Network



Supporting the education community

In the last issue of Healthmatters, we touched on the work that we're doing with the education community through grants, scholarships and programs. We're proud of this work and would like to tell you a bit more about one of our programs offered in partnership with the NSW Department of Education.



> STAFF AT BUDAWANG SCHOOL PARTICIPATING IN A YOGA PROGRAM

The Teachers Health Fund School Staff Health and Wellbeing Grants Program was designed to support schools in implementing and maintaining initiatives for teaching and administrative staff which promote physical and mental health and wellbeing.

A successful pilot of the program achieved significant health outcomes and the program was subsequently extended, with applications received from schools across the targeted networks. Each school's needs were very different and were covered with a range of activities designed to enhance the health and wellbeing of staff covered in the applications. Here is a taster of activities undertaken:

MINDFULNESS

A mindfulness program was undertaken by staff at Broulee Public School. The program included a presentation by visiting international presenter, Jean Watson, and sessions for teaching, support and administration staff with a further session for parents.

YOGA

To support staff at Budawang School in working with students with special needs, a yoga program was specifically designed to develop core strength to help ensure that staff can safely carry out their duties.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Staff from Cabramurra Public School attended a weekend program at Bournda Environmental Education Centre. Designed to support mindfulness and wellbeing, the program included walking sessions, bird watching, bike riding and a number of presentations.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Lavington East Public School enjoyed a series of health and wellbeing sessions delivered by a Bluearth Coach, including engaging physical activities to support the needs of the group and individuals.

MUSIC LESSONS

A wellness and sporting program which focussed on the importance of looking after your health was developed for staff at Ulladulla High School. Activities

included a walking group, surfing and ukulele lessons!

Feedback from the program has been hugely positive with participating schools commenting that the program encouraged their staff to focus on their physical, social and emotional needs.

an outstanding opportunity to focus on staff and their wellbeing

With busy schedules, the program enabled participants to make time to de-stress and focus on their health and wellbeing. The programs undertaken also further enhanced positive learning cultures, with reports of teaching and non-teaching staff enjoying activities together, which also benefitted students and their families. We look forward to building on these successes with the next round of grants with programs including group personal training sessions, visits from a nutritionist, drumming lessons, relaxation sessions and pottery classes.

For more information on the grants program, contact Jane Stower, National Partnerships Manager on jane.stower@teachershealth.com.au

MEMBER PROFILE:

Melissa Tinkler



You may have seen Teachers Health Fund member, Melissa Tinkler on our new website so we asked Mel to tell us a bit more about herself and why she chose the Fund.

Healthmatters: Hi Mel, can you tell us a bit about yourself?

Mel: Hi there! I work at Lara Lake Primary School in Victoria where I teach a grade four class. I've been teaching for 26 years now.

HM: What made you look at Teachers Health Fund?

M: I'd heard about the Fund from other teachers and your Business Development Officers visiting my school. Colleagues had positive reviews of the Fund – easy claiming and great benefits – and, as our current fund kept altering our cover by reducing services and increasing our expenses, we decided to look into Teachers Health Fund. We found a far better quality of product and level of service which matched our family's needs perfectly.

HM: What do you like about Teachers Health Fund?

M: I like the fact that there's a fund that considers the high demands, physically and mentally, of working in education and is specifically designed for teachers, whether it be medical or overall wellbeing. I don't think you can fully understand the demands of being a teacher without working in education and the Fund knows what we need.

Also, our previous fund was for-profit so, when I looked into Teachers Health Fund, I especially liked the fact that all profits are invested back into the Fund so services can be maintained.

HM: Would you recommend Teachers Health Fund to family and friends?

M: Yes, and I have! I tell them that the service is excellent, you can always speak to a real person but the online service is also easy to navigate. Benefits can be paid on a huge range of services from hospital cover to all aspects of wellbeing from physio to dental to all types of support services. We've claimed for physio, dental, hospital, doctors, optical ... you name it!

HM: What does Teachers Health Fund mean to you?

M: It means that I can relax. My husband and two children are also covered on our family policy so I feel rest assured that if any medical emergencies arise, then we are supported financially and have greater options for the very best care at the best hospitals with the best doctors. This is particularly important to me as a mother as I can choose the very, very best for my children.

NOTICEBOARD

NEW WEBSITE

We've made improvements to our website to help make things easier for you! New features include an exclusive 'Members' section, so you can find everything you need in one place. Visit teachershealth.com.au to take a look.

COMPETITION WINNER!

Congratulations to Benjamin Dewson our Feedback ASAP prize draw winner who has won a \$1,000 Visa gift card. We hope you enjoy your prize!

ONLINE MEMBER SERVICES

Online Member Services is an easy and secure way to manage your membership. You can update your personal details, change your cover, check your waiting periods and claims history plus much more! To register, click 'Members' at teachershealth.com.au and choose 'login' at 'My Membership'. Select 'Register', complete the required information and 'Submit'. It's that easy!

MOBILE CLAIMING

Don't forget we've got a mobile claiming app for simple and convenient claiming.

For more information and to download the app, visit teachershealth.com.au/app

R U OK?

Don't forget to ask "Are you ok?" on R U OK? Day (8 September). Visit ruok.org.au for news, information and tools to help you start conversations.



Be Medicinewise

This month marks 'Be Medicinewise Week' so we hear more from NPS MedicineWise about considering the medicines you take and how to get the most out of them. You're never too busy to be medicinewise!

We all take medicines but too often we take them for granted. Having the right information and understanding your medicines will help you and those who care for you to make better decisions about your health and importantly, get the best results from your medicines.

We can find information about medicines from many sources, including the internet, the media, family and friends, but being medicinewise means being informed and using reliable, fact-based sources of information. By being medicinewise you'll know what you're taking, why and how it could affect you and whether a medicine is the best option. The more you know, the more confident you'll be to talk about your options with your doctor.

BE MEDICINEWISE WITH CHILDREN

Small mistakes can cause big problems in little bodies so parents and carers need to know how to give medicines to children safely, including accurately measuring and administering to avoid accidental under-dosing

or over-dosing. It's important to read the label, know the active ingredient, dose according to weight and age, understand possible side effects and keep accurate records of what, how much and when medication has been administered.

BE MEDICINEWISE AS A TEENAGER AND YOUNG ADULT

As you start taking care of your own health and medicines you need to know the right questions to ask and the correct medicinewise practices. A teenage body is growing and changing and it's important to understand not only the benefits of medicines but also the risks, including side effects and interactions to help reduce the chances of a problem and ensure you're prepared.

BE MEDICINEWISE AS YOU'RE GETTING OLDER

The process of ageing means that older people's bodies handle medicines slightly differently than younger people's bodies and may be more sensitive to the intended effects, side effects and interactions. These changes to the body need to be taken into account regarding types and doses of medicine. Being medicinewise also includes finding ways to remember to take medicines at the right time and the right dose and how to deal with any complicated medicine schedules.

BE MEDICINEWISE WHEN PREGNANT AND BREASTFEEDING

Some medicines are safe to use during pregnancy and breastfeeding, but some have risks. For pregnant women or those planning to be, it's important to consider the effect any medicine may have. When breastfeeding, remember that medicines taken may pass into breast milk. It's important to discuss any effects or interactions with your doctor and together weight up the benefits and risks.

ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR MEDICINES

The first question to ask is 'what is this medicine for?'. By asking questions about your medicines or medical tests, you'll get more out of a visit to your doctor, pharmacist or other health professional. Getting the information that you need about your medicines will help you to make better informed decisions.

KNOW IT'S A MEDICINE

Medicines don't just come on prescription they also include over-the-counter medicines from a pharmacy, supermarket or other store, as well as herbal remedies, vitamins and other supplements. They come in many different forms, such as tablets, liquids and creams, and different medicines do different things so it's important to consider all the medicines you're taking and using.

KNOW THE ACTIVE INGREDIENT IN YOUR MEDICINES

Always ask 'what is the active ingredient?'. The active ingredient in the medicine identifies the chemical that makes it work. Many medicines with the same active ingredient are available under several different brand names and packaging. Your pharmacist may offer you an alternative brand with the same active ingredient as the one on your prescription or the medicine you usually take.

It's important that your doctor knows all the non-prescribed medications you are taking. For more information, including questions to ask your doctor or pharmacist and free medicine list templates and downloads, visit nps.org.au.

NPS MedicineWise is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and provide free, independent, not-for-profit, evidence-based information to enable better decisions about medicines and medical tests. For more information, visit nps.org.au



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