

# ST AGNES SURGERY

1251 North East Rd

Ridgehaven 5097

P: 8264 3333



# TEA TREE SURGERY

975 North East Rd

Modbury 5092

P: 8264 4555



## PRACTICE PARTNERS

**Dr John LePoidevin**

**Dr Karen Hand**

**Dr James Robertson**

**Dr Jyothi Menon**

**Dr Stephen Davis**

**Dr Hamad Harb**

**Dr Janet Davie**

**Dr Natasha Lambert**

## ASSOCIATE DOCTORS

**Dr Suresh Babu AM**

**Dr Paul Veitch**

**Dr Georgia Peters**

**Dr Emily Harty**

**Dr Chloe Shelton**

## SURGERY HOURS AND SERVICES

ST AGNES SURGERY

**Monday to Friday** 8.00am–5.30pm

TEA TREE SURGERY

**Monday to Friday** 8.30am–6.00pm

**Saturday** 8.00am–12.00pm

## WEEKEND AFTER HOURS & PUBLIC HOLIDAY HOURS

After hours service sessions are at **Tea Tree Surgery**.

**Saturday** 8.00am–12.00pm

**Sunday & Public Hols** 9.00am–1.00pm

An appointment time is required.

For urgent medical problems outside these hours, a duty doctor can be contacted on 8264 3333 (St Agnes Surgery) or 8264 4555 (Tea Tree Surgery). Follow the instructions on the recorded message.

You can now find us on the web at

[www.stagnessurgery.com.au](http://www.stagnessurgery.com.au)

# YOUR DOCTOR

MAY 2024



**FOOD AND MOOD**



**SMOKING & BACK PAIN**



**TOFU BENEFITS**



**DIFFICULTY SWALLOWING**

*Compliments of your GP*

## Balancing act: managing your thyroid health

**The thyroid, a small gland located in your neck, is crucial for helping your body regulate and use energy. When it functions incorrectly, it can lead to various disorders.**

The hormones produced by your thyroid ensure a steady supply of energy for your needs, influencing the function of nearly every organ, including your heart. Problems can result when your thyroid produces too much hormone (hyperthyroidism), or not enough (hypothyroidism).

**Hyperthyroidism** – an overactive thyroid speeds up many of your body's functions, leading to symptoms such as weight loss, increased appetite, rapid pulse, and feelings of anxiety or nervousness. Among the most common causes are: Graves' disease – an autoimmune disorder, inflammation of the thyroid and the presence of non-cancerous nodules (lumps) in your thyroid.

**Hypothyroidism** – an underactive thyroid has the opposite effect, which may result in weight gain, fatigue, depression, dry skin and hair, muscle and joint pain, and sensitivity to cold. Hypothyroidism is fairly common, particularly among women.

It's commonly caused by Hashimoto's disease, where the immune system mistakenly attacks the thyroid gland. Other causes include thyroid surgery, radiation therapy, certain medications, low iodine intake, pituitary gland issues, or pregnancy.

### Can what you eat affect thyroid health?

Yes, eating a variety of nutrients is important; some trace minerals affect thyroid function, such as iodine, selenium, iron, and zinc. For thyroid health, diagnosis and management from a healthcare provider is crucial.

### Iodine

Iodine is essential for normal thyroid function; however iodine deficiency is an increasingly common cause of thyroid health problems in Australia. Most iodine comes from our diet, mainly seafood, dairy products, bread, eggs and iodised salt.

A low iodine diet can cause hypothyroidism, and iodine requirements increase during pregnancy and breast

feeding. Iodine supplementation may be recommended by healthcare professionals in these circumstances.

On the other hand, consuming iodine-rich foods like seaweed or iodine supplements may sometimes worsen hyperthyroidism.

### Selenium

Generally, selenium is in many foods, particularly Brazil nuts, sunflower seeds, eggs, some seafood, meat, brown rice or foods like cereal and pasta.

Iron and zinc can improve an underactive thyroid and are found in green leafy vegetables, legumes, red meat, and egg yolks.

While we need trace minerals in small amounts, deficiencies or excesses can lead to health problems. Also there are many ways they can affect different thyroid conditions, therefore seeking expert advice on maintaining a balanced diet is crucial.



**May is Thyroid Awareness Month  
- be aware of your thyroid health**

[www.thyroidfoundation.org.au](http://www.thyroidfoundation.org.au)

*Our newsletter is free! Please take a copy with you.*

# Smoke signals: the link between smoking and back pain

Most people are aware of the dangers of cigarette smoking. It's a habit that poses significant health risks such as lung cancer and heart disease, but did you know that it's also associated with back pain? The connection may seem obscure at first, so let's see how smoking might cause or worsen back pain.

## Chronic inflammation

Tobacco smoke contains over 7,000 chemicals known to harm your body in various ways; including some that can affect your back. For instance, smoking can worsen chronic inflammation, a prolonged bodily response linked to back problems.

Chronic inflammation can break down proteins needed for muscle strength and endurance, weakening muscles and contributing to pain and discomfort. Since people with low back pain often have higher inflammation levels, smoking can make back issues worse.

## Bone weakness and healing

Recent evidence shows that tobacco smoking leads to lower bone mass, increasing the risk of osteoporosis and fractures.

This means even a cough or a minor fall could cause bone fractures, including in your spine. Osteoporosis can lead to skeletal deformities, joint issues, and increased muscle tension. Severe back pain is common for people who have this condition.

Smoking cigarettes also slows down the healing of fractures. The more you smoke, and the longer you smoke, the worse these effects become, although more studies are needed to find out exactly why. Smoking also leads to more complications during medical treatments, making recovery and hospital stays longer.

## Blood circulation

Smoking cigarettes reduces blood flow to your spine, depriving it of the essential nutrients it needs. This can cause the discs – the cushioning between your vertebrae – to harden and tear. Additionally joint cartilage can deteriorate, reducing shock absorption, and lubrication. The overall result is faster wear on bones, discs, and joints, along with slower healing. This combination can lead to degeneration, damage, dysfunction, and pain.

## Mental health

Smoking not only causes physical changes that worsen back pain but can also affect mental well-being. Stress, in particular, increases the chances of long-term low back pain.

Stress makes some people turn to smoking to find relaxation through the nicotine hit. However, once the calming effect fades, stress-like symptoms such as anger, anxiety, frustration, and irritability can emerge. This sets up a harmful cycle of stress, smoking, and pain.



In summary: smokers, compared to non-smokers, are more likely to experience more sore areas and stronger pain. But the news is not all bad! Stopping smoking helps to halt, even reverse, the damage; allowing your back to heal. This big step will not only improve your overall health, but could also lessen your back pain.

## Dysphagia: swallowing problems

Swallowing, it's something most of us do without a second thought, effortlessly moving food and drink from mouth to stomach. But for many people, swallowing isn't as simple as it seems.

### What happens if you have dysphagia?

Dysphagia is a complex condition where swallowing becomes difficult. It's not just a case of occasionally feeling food is "going down the wrong way". It can involve choking, coughing, clearing throat during or after meals, hoarseness, drooling, bringing food back up, weight loss, and feeling as if food is stuck in your throat or chest.

Dysphagia can lead to serious complications if left untreated, such as malnutrition, dehydration, and aspiration. Aspiration means that food or drink goes into your airways rather than your oesophagus, which can lead to pneumonia.

Having dysphagia can be a persistent challenge, and its effects are more than physical. Everyday eating situations can turn into sources of stress, anxiety and

frustration; whether it is coping alone at home, or planning social occasions.

### What causes Dysphagia?

There are many possible causes for dysphagia, including:

- conditions that damage your brain and nerves
- muscle problems in your face, neck, or oesophagus
- issues with structures in your mouth, throat and neck.
- reflux - a condition where stomach acid flows upward into the oesophagus.

It can be a combination of these problems and is more common among elderly individuals.

### Hope and help is available

Living with dysphagia isn't easy, but there's help available, and it can be navigated with awareness, patience and perseverance.

Therapy, such as new strategies for swallowing safely, and exercises which help improve muscle response and coordination can help. For some people,

dietary modifications, such as pureed foods or thickened liquids, may be recommended, or become necessary.

Treatment varies depending on the underlying cause and severity of dysphagia, and is usually managed by a team of health professionals with different skills.

By shedding light on the challenges and solutions, and providing understanding and empathy, we can offer support for people living with dysphagia.



# What's new on tofu?

Tofu, also known as bean curd, has been a traditional part of Asian cooking for centuries. However, recently it's gained worldwide attention for its versatility and health benefits, prompting ongoing research into the ways its nutrients affect our health.

Whether you're looking to boost your protein intake, support your well-being, or simply enjoy delicious and nutritious meals, tofu is a good choice. So let's take a closer look and explore its health possibilities.

## What is tofu?

Tofu is made from soybeans, which are soaked and boiled to produce soy milk. The milk is then separated into solid curds and liquid whey. The curds are pressed into blocks, creating tofu.

## Nutrition

Tofu provides all nine essential amino acids, making it a complete protein source, particularly beneficial for vegetarians and vegans. Protein is essential for tissue building and repair, enzyme and hormone production, and immune support.

Among these amino acids is tryptophan, which your body converts into serotonin, a neurotransmitter that helps regulate mood,

sleep, appetite, and cognition. See our article on serotonin in this edition to find out more.

Tofu is not only rich in protein but also a good source of calcium, manganese, copper, selenium, vitamin A, phosphorus and iron. It's also low in kilojoules and contains no cholesterol, making it a heart-healthy protein choice.

## Health Benefits

Soy foods like tofu have demonstrated blood pressure and cholesterol-lowering effects, contributing to a reduced risk of heart disease. Experts believe this is due to their combination of fibre, protein, and isoflavones.

Tofu is high in isoflavones; naturally occurring plant compounds that may function similarly to oestrogen. The isoflavones in tofu may help reduce the risk of certain cancers, improve bone density and brain function, and alleviate symptoms of menopause.

Keep in mind that further research on tofu is needed to confirm these health benefits, and soybean products may not be suitable for everyone. Moderation is important - consult a healthcare professional before making big dietary changes, especially if you have an existing health condition.



## Tofu stir-fry with brown rice

Here's a simple and healthy recipe for Asian-inspired tofu stir-fry.

### INGREDIENTS:

- 200g firm tofu, drained and cubed
- 1 tsp of five-spice seasoning
- 1 Tbsp. sesame oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tsp grated ginger
- 2 cups mixed vegetables, sliced or chopped (such as red and green peppers, broccoli, carrots, and snap peas)
- 1 cup cooked brown rice
- 2 Tbsp. soy or tamari sauce
- 1 Tbsp. rice vinegar

### INSTRUCTIONS:

- Gently toss the tofu cubes in a bowl with five-spice seasoning.
- Heat oil in a large frying pan or wok over medium-high heat.
- Add garlic and ginger, and sauté until fragrant.
- Add tofu to the pan, cook for 5-7 minutes, turning occasionally, until browned on all sides.
- Add mixed vegetables to the skillet and stir-fry for an additional 5-7 minutes, or until vegetables are tender yet crunchy.
- In a small bowl, whisk together soy sauce and rice vinegar. Pour mixture over the tofu and vegetables and stir, cook for another 2-3 minutes.

### SERVING:

Serve the stir-fry over cooked brown rice. Garnish with sesame seeds or sliced green onions if desired. Enjoy your nutritious and flavourful meal!

## WORD SEARCH

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| ASPIRATION       | HYPOTHYROIDISM | PROTEIN    |
| CALCIUM          | IODINE         | SELENIUM   |
| DISCS            | IRON           | SEROTONIN  |
| DYSPHAGIA        | MALNUTRITION   | SLEEP      |
| HEALING          | MINERALS       | THYROID    |
| HORMONE          | MOOD           | TOFU       |
| HYPERTHYROID-ISM | OESOPHAGUS     | TRYPTOPHAN |
|                  | OSTEOPOROSIS   | ZINC       |

# The power of serotonin: 6 foods for a happier, calmer you

Have you ever wondered why a sunny day or chocolate can brighten your mood? The answer could lie in serotonin, a natural chemical found in our bodies. Let's explore its role and how certain foods may help serotonin production, potentially improving sleep, stress management, and mood regulation.

## Understanding serotonin and mood

An area in your brain produces serotonin, a natural chemical that is present throughout your body, and made from a protein called tryptophan. Serotonin has many different roles in your body; from muscle movement to inflammation and even appetite. It works with melatonin to help control your sleep, and is vital for regulating mood. When serotonin levels are balanced, you may feel happier and calmer. Low serotonin levels in your brain are thought to contribute to conditions such as depression, anxiety, digestive problems and sleep disturbances.



## The link between food and serotonin

Certain foods are thought to help our bodies produce more serotonin, but more research is needed to fully understand this process. These foods may make a difference in your overall well-being:

- 1 Complex carbohydrates: foods like whole grains, brown rice, and quinoa aid in the production of serotonin. They help increase the absorption of tryptophan.
- 2 Healthy fats: Omega-3 fatty acids, found in fatty fish like salmon, walnuts, and flaxseeds, are not only great for your heart but also support serotonin production.
- 3 Protein: include protein-rich foods like chicken, turkey, eggs, and tofu in your meals. These foods contain tryptophan, a building block for serotonin.
- 4 Colourful fruits and vegetables: especially bananas, avocados, and berries, are packed with vitamins and minerals that help your body produce serotonin and support overall health.
- 5 Nuts and seeds: snack on almonds, pumpkin seeds, and sunflower seeds. They're excellent sources of magnesium, which supports serotonin balance in your brain.
- 6 Dark chocolate: indulge in a small piece of dark chocolate. It contains antioxidants and triggers the release of endorphins, making you feel happier.

It's important to note that while diet can play a role in serotonin production and mood, it's not the only factor. If you're experiencing mental health issues, consult with your doctor for appropriate treatment.

## PRACTICE INFORMATION

### SKIN CHECK CLINIC

Skin Check Clinic is available through Dr Harb at Tea Tree Surgery.

### DUTY DOCTOR CLINIC

Each weekday for our patients who need to be seen on that day but cannot get an appointment, can be seen by the Duty Doctor. An appointment is required. Private fee applies for all patients.

### DIABETES CLINICS

St Agnes Surgery and Tea Tree Surgery offer a Diabetes Clinic which is proving very successful with patients achieving significantly improved control and knowledge of their diabetes.

### SENIOR'S HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

St Agnes Surgery provides a comprehensive health assessment for patients 75 years of age and over – the program involves a detailed functional and safety assessment conducted by our Nurse, followed by a medical check-up with your Doctor.

### PRACTICE ACCREDITATION

St Agnes Surgery and Tea Tree Surgery have achieved FULL ACCREDITATION until January 2027. Accreditation reflects the attainment of national standards of quality at a practice level.

### PRIVACY

This practice is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of your personal health information. Your medical record is a confidential document. It is the policy of this 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.

## Questions to ask at your next doctor's visit

Asking questions is key to good communication with your doctor. To make the most of your visit, write down what you want to know in the area below. Bring this list to your next appointment so you remember what you wanted to ask.

DOCTOR'S NAME	DATE	TIME

1.
2.
3.
NOTES:

**Disclaimer:** The information in this newsletter is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Decisions relating to your health should always be made in consultation with your health care provider. Talk to your doctor first.

*Our newsletter is free! Please take a copy with you.*