

A WHOLE NEW BALL GAME

HEALTH ADVICE FOR
AUSTRALIAN MEN
ISSUE 6 // JULY 2008

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Welcome to the latest edition of *A Whole New Ball Game*.

The team at Foundation 49 hopes you had a great International Men’s Health Week in early June. Did you happen to see one of our community grants in action?

Once again this year, we offered small grants to community groups around the country. The money helped to provide a billycart breakfast for fathers and sons, a bush escape for Aboriginal blokes (see page 2), a morning tea with pirates from the good ship ‘Hail and Hearty’, health checks for Kurdish men in Sydney and for Angry Anderson to sing his way to good health for the Binnaway blokes in New South Wales. These were just a few of 21 special events made possible through the magnificent and cooperative efforts of those on the ground in the community

– and the small team based at Cabrini Health in Malvern, Victoria.

We operate without any government funding and appreciate any financial support offered.

This August, in partnership with Langton’s, we are holding the inaugural Foundation 49 Tony Hitchin Memorial wine Auction, in memory of our founder Tony Hitchin.

So if you are into fine wine and would like to support Foundation 49; you might like to make the most of the offer below by joining Langton’s wine auction house – for free. It’s normally \$33 a year. This will allow you to bid for some mighty fine wine from August 25 to September 8. We’d like to thank Stewart Langton for his kind offer to hold an auction in support of Foundation 49. All funds raised will come to us so we can continue to reach out to Aussie men, to encourage them to live long and to live well.

Thanks also to all the wineries around the country who have couriered, posted or

hand-delivered donated wine to Langton’s for the auction. We are very grateful

– and excited by the chance to try out this innovative way of buying fine wine.

Check out the details below. You can pre-register or wait until the auction begins.

Until next time,

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
GARY RICHARDSON

CHAIRMAN, FOUNDATION 49

LIVE LONG. LIVE WELL.
WWW.49.COM.AU

Foundation 49 is funded through donations and special events. For more information or to make a donation, please call (03) 9508 1567 or visit our website, www.49.com.au

Foundation 49 is an initiative of Cabrini Health. Thanks to Cabrini for its ongoing support.

SUBSCRIBE NOW for Foundation 49’s online wine auction from August 25

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Langton’s would be pleased to offer Foundation 49 readers a complimentary membership. To access your free membership, please use the following web address;

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Your promotional code is: Langton

Join today and support the Foundation 49 Tony Hitchin Memorial Wine Auction.

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Life's more than black and white for this magpie

Family and football club commitments mean Tarkyn Lockyer enjoys a full and colourful life.



Tell us about your family

My family is very good. I'm happily married to the lovely Benita, and we've been married for just on three years now. I've got a young family, two children, a young son, Charlie, who is two and a quarter, and a three-month old daughter, Leni, so family life for me at the moment is quite hectic. Charlie's definitely an active child, and Leni's not doing much at the moment, other than smiling and carrying on, so it's good. It's just good to have something outside of footy, where you come home, win, lose or draw, and the kids don't care about the result, or whether you've played well or played badly, you've always got something else in your life that's more important than footy, it's good fun at the moment.

Do you have any health concerns?

The only things that concern me, with playing a contact sport, are the rigours you put your body through as an AFL player, coupled with the fact I do have a young family and I love spending time with them, so where is my body going to be at in another ten years time. You hear a lot of stories about knee replacements and hip replacements and that sort of stuff. At the end of the day, it's fantastic to have an AFL career, but more importantly I want to be able to enjoy my kids growing up and be able to play with them, so they're my only real concerns at the moment.

How have you dealt with them?

I just think, as an AFL footballer, you look after yourself and enjoy a well balanced life. At the club we're quite privileged, we've access to massage, physio, and expert conditioning and recovery staff. I suppose the beauty of playing football is you get paid to get fit and to stay healthy, so we're pretty lucky.

In your frantic life, do you manage to steal any moments to yourself?

Very, very seldom, do I have moments to myself. I enjoy having an afternoon off where I can have a sleep on the couch or something like that, but those sort of moments are absolutely few and far between, when they happen, they're very special to me.

How do you deal with stress?

I think I deal with stress through routine. When you look at football and you look at life, football's very much a confidence sport, and I derive all of my confidence from my routine. I know that if I tick all the boxes during the week in preparation for the game, and I do everything I need to do, I'll be as prepared as what I'll ever be going into a game. Therefore, that eliminates some of the stress. The only time I'll be a little bit uptight is when I haven't done the work and I leave anything to chance.

Any tips for other blokes on finding life balance?

The biggest thing for me was actually settling down with my girlfriend and getting married. It changes your life in one way, but also gives you that balance where you have your time in football and you're focused on football, and that's my job at the moment, and having a partner who's so supportive, really allows me to concentrate on football.

When was your last health check?

I probably see the club doctors every day, although it's been a while since I've had my actual blood pressure taken, so I probably should look into having a formal health check.

Where's your favourite holiday destination?

My favourite holiday destination would have to be Fiji. I've been there a couple of times, really enjoyed it and I've got some great memories.

Describe a perfect day

The perfect day for me would probably be on holidays somewhere, no telephones, nothing to worry about, no media, not having to sign any autographs or anything like that. Just getting up at eight o'clock, going down to the beach and having a beautiful breakfast, then a nice sunset with a few quiet beers followed by a lovely dinner and nice early night.

Making a difference – Aboriginal men lead the way

There's a grim statistic that says that while prostate cancer is the most common cancer affecting Australian men¹ it isn't considered a major health issue for indigenous males. If you're thinking that this sounds like good news for Aboriginal men you'd be wrong. The reason prostate cancer rarely affects indigenous males is that they generally don't live long enough to contract the disease.

¹ Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia

While recent research shows some welcome and long overdue improvements in health, education, home ownership rates and employment for indigenous Australians, the stats are still shocking when compared with those of the wider population.

Life expectancy at birth for an indigenous male is a mere 59 years. That's 17.2 years less than the average for a non-indigenous Australian man. Many Aboriginal men won't even make 59. Death rates for indigenous people aged between 35 and 54 are five to six times higher than for non-indigenous Australians.

For the male health co-ordinator at the Alice Springs-based Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, John Little, the life expectancy statistics have massive implications.

"That's a problem that really needs a concentrated effort, that early death rate," he says. "Or pretty soon we won't have any elders left. I am in my fifties and I nearly qualify just on the basis of my age. We need

a major effort to make men feel good about themselves again."

Rebuilding self-esteem can be a slow process but the Congress' Male Health Centre is finding simple things can make a big difference to the lives of indigenous men.

The centre began as a sexually transmitted infections (STI) program but has expanded to provide services such as health checks, nutritional advice, family violence and anger management counselling and rehabilitation for sexual offenders. The centre doesn't advertise but regularly attracts up to 70 men per day.

"Most of the guys we get are from remote communities," John says. "Word of mouth goes out through the communities and the guys find their way here."

The centre has all male staff and designated male-only areas, which works to encourage men to open up about matters they wouldn't discuss at local health clinics.

Hard facts

The Federal Government report *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage 2007* states that while infant mortality rates improved for indigenous children in the past decade, other health outcomes deteriorated. For example, indigenous males are 17.5 times more likely to have kidney disease than non-indigenous males.

Indigenous Australians are also:

- three times more likely to have diabetes compared to non-indigenous people
- more likely to have asthma, arthritis, back pain, heart and circulatory problems
- more likely to have sexually transmitted infections
- more likely to be hospitalised for diseases associated with poor sewerage and water quality
- more likely to be hospitalised for all chronic diseases except cancer
- more likely to commit suicide², with the rate of suicide by indigenous males increasing by an average of 17.4 per cent annually between 1981 and 2002
- over-represented in all forms of violent crime in Australia – both as victims and offenders.

² Data based on suicide rates for Qld, WA, SA and NT only

"A lot of the guys tell us they wouldn't be tested at home because often there are only female workers, often their own relatives, and they prefer to have some confidentiality."

STIs are prevalent in approximately 15 per cent of indigenous Australians under 25 in central Australia and the gonorrhoea infection rate in the region is a massive 50 times higher than the national average.

While many infections can be treated with a single injection, others (such as syphilis) require three treatments – which can be tricky with the transient nature of visitors to the centre.

John says centre staff know where to search for men in the various community camps around Alice Springs and sometimes actively seek them out to discuss test results.

"We're getting more men self-presenting for checks and coming back for the results," he says. "This is a positive change. A lot of the guys are doing this now."

Among the services the centre offers, the simple provision of washing machines and showers is vital.

"These guys come in from the bush and have been having a good time. They come in here with a sorry look, dragging their feet.

"They usually start by washing their clothes and having a shower and after they chill-out for a while, we encourage them to get a check-up."

Music can also boost morale so the centre has hard-working guitars and a well-worn keyboard.

"Music is sometimes the only solace these guys have apart from the grog. Most Aboriginal men can play a musical instrument. We'll hear a whole range of stuff here from rock and roll from the older guys to reggae from the younger blokes."

The centre also provides cooking classes using simple implements such as recycled flour drums and healthy ingredients.

"Most of the guys live on bread, tea and meat. We show them you don't have to be a woman to know how to cook and that there are simple, healthy things they can cook, with items available in their communities."

He sees some positives to the Federal Government intervention in the Northern Territory but is also acutely aware that the publicity generated by the unprecedented move has hit indigenous men hard. He reckons "not all indigenous males are bastards" despite media coverage that might leave this impression.

"The intervention has had a massive effect on men here in central Australia. The guys have said they feel ashamed as men to walk down the street or stand in line at the supermarket. They feel uncomfortable cuddling their kids and being good uncles and grandfathers. They worry that people will call them paedophiles."

The centre holds weekly health education sessions, chaired by cultural brokers, where men are encouraged to speak freely about their experiences.

"There have been lots of things that have weakened the role of men in society. There are not many places to hunt and provide for their families, for starters. A supermarket is no place to hunt!

"So we want to help men find positive roles in their communities, help them take on leadership roles like coaching the local footy team."

John spoke at a national men's health conference in 2007 and found that these male identity issues resonated with Aboriginal and non-indigenous Australians alike.

"I found myself surrounded," he laughs. "People were saying we need these kind of services for men all over Australia."



Foundation 49 grant at work

Cultural activities during the daytime, chatting around the campfire by night. That was the basic timetable for a camp conducted by the Shoalhaven Tree of Knowledge Koori Men and Boys Network earlier this year.

Aboriginal health worker Ron Thomas said the camp, supported by a Foundation 49 Men's Health Community Grant, proved to be a good way to promote wellbeing issues for men.

"Yarning about things around the fire makes it easier to discuss things in a relaxed way," he says. "Promoting health was one of our main objectives and it went really well. Everyone really enjoyed it."

Campfire discussions over the course of the four-day break, led by Aboriginal Medical Service health workers, covered topics as varied as depression, diabetes and testicular cancer. Blood pressure and blood glucose tests were also conducted in the evenings.

A dozen men attended, travelling south from Nowra to Racecourse Beach, near Ulladulla NSW.

Mr Thomas said the site had great cultural significance and featured one of the biggest shell middens in NSW. "There's always been an abundance of seafood so it's a great place for cultural activities – including some top fishing."

ABOVE: ATHOL LESTER, ADO WEBSTER, NICK CARTER, JOEL DEEVES, EUAN THOMAS AND RONNIE THOMAS DURING THEIR FOUR-DAY MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT CAMP



When
your
heart
says

“Enough!”

Knowing that one Australian dies of heart disease every 10 minutes probably won't be enough to prompt you to slow down and consider your own heart health. But actually knowing of a real person who has suffered a tragic event might make all the difference.

When the well-known businessman 'Crazy' John Ilhan suffered a fatal heart attack late in 2007, aged only 42, it was cause for many men to stop and think.

Heart specialist at Cabrini Health, Dr James Shaw, says Mr Ilhan's tragic death provided a dramatic boost in awareness of heart diseases.

“We've certainly seen more young men conscious of (heart health) after that,” Dr Shaw says. “So that has been a positive to come out of that situation.”

While advances in medical therapies mean people are living longer and patients with heart conditions are getting older, Dr Shaw says: “there are still too many young people dying of heart disease”.

Given that heart disease remains the number one killer of Australian males, Dr Shaw says that men “could be more aware of the risks” and make simple lifestyle changes in order to protect and enhance their cardiovascular health.

Giving your heart a workout with regular physical activity is important although Dr Shaw warns exercise alone isn't enough.

Other keys to preventing heart disease include addressing any diabetes-related issues, weight loss, not smoking and altering your eating habits to reduce cholesterol. A low fat diet, with lots of fresh fruit and vegetables, will help keep cholesterol levels as low as possible.

Combating cholesterol is vital to ensure the supply of blood to the heart itself. If the coronary arteries become narrowed

or clogged by cholesterol and fat deposits, not enough blood reaches the heart, starving it of crucial oxygen and other nutrients.

Too little blood reaching the heart can result in chest pain or angina. If most or all of the blood supply to a portion of the heart is cut off, the result is a heart attack.

In the event of a heart attack, a speedy response can help minimise the damage caused by insufficient blood flow. This is why awareness and early recognition of the warning signs can potentially be lifesaving.

While a common perception of heart attack involves a sudden, intense event where a person clutches their chest in pain before falling over, many heart attacks start slowly as a mild pain or discomfort.

“The good news is that even if you have a family history of heart disease, simple lifestyle changes can significantly reduce your chances of adding to the statistics.”

Even a history of heart attack might not assist with detection as the symptoms can vary from one attack to another.

You should seek medical help immediately if any of the following warning signs are detected:

- Discomfort in the centre of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back;
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach;
- Shortness of breath before or after chest pain; and
- Breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea, or light-headedness.

If you have had a heart scare, you're likely to be referred to a cardiologist for treatment.

When advising people about altering their lifestyles to avoid further illness, Dr Shaw says he generally recommends introducing changes “nice and slowly”.

While it's normal to panic and try to abandon old habits entirely, doing too much too soon can make the adjustment seem too difficult a task, discouraging people from doing anything at all.

The good news is that even if you have a family history of heart disease, those simple lifestyle changes can significantly reduce your chances of adding to the statistics.

WITH THANKS TO **DR JOHN ASHFIELD** WHOSE BOOK, *MATTERS FOR MEN*, IS AVAILABLE ONLINE AT WWW.PEACOCKPUBLICATIONS.COM.AU



Dicky heart?

A healthy heart could improve your sex life

Just as a dodgy fuel pump can bring your car to a standstill, cardiovascular problems can play a significant role in erectile dysfunction – also known as impotence. If the heart isn't working as it should or the blood vessels are clogged, blood flow may be insufficient to get or maintain an erection.

Erectile dysfunction may even be a sign of a developing cardiovascular illness – simply because the penis is one of the first and most visible regions of the body affected by reduced blood flow.

Improving your blood flow basically comes back to improving your cardiovascular health. To give your heart a hand:

- stop smoking;
- build-in regular physical activity;
- eat less fatty, blood-vessel-clogging foods; and
- drink no more than two alcoholic drinks a day and give your liver two days off each week.

If you're carrying a few extra kilos, weight loss can also take some strain off your heart.

It's important to find out about the health of your blood vessels. To do this, ask your doctor to check your blood pressure and cholesterol. High blood cholesterol and blood pressure can both be warning signs for heart disease and stroke.

Medications can also affect your blood flow, along with health conditions such as diabetes, obesity, snoring or fatigue. Indeed, in some cases getting a good night's sleep might be just what the doctor orders.

Big night out? Beware the diseases between the sheets



The number of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) reported in Australia tripled between 1997 and 2004. And yes, you read that correctly.

While the increase may reflect more screenings, better diagnostic tests and awareness campaigns, the fact remains: there were 46,762 cases reported in 2004, compared to only 15,335 in 1997.

Having largely dropped off the public health radar since the 1980s when the Grim Reaper warned us all of the dangers of AIDS, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are a hot topic once again.

The most common infection passed from person to person during sexual contact is chlamydia – a bacterial illness that can infect the urethra in men and the cervix in women and, sometimes, the anus.

Chlamydia cases increased 14 per cent between 2003 and 2004. Most people don't experience symptoms but those who do may suffer from:

- redness at the opening of the penis;
- stinging or burning when urinating;
- a clear discharge from the penis; and
- swelling or pain in the testicles if the infection remains untreated.

The next most frequently reported STI was gonococcal infection. While only 7,098 cases of gonorrhoea were reported in 2004, this was the highest number recorded since 1991.

Sometimes referred to as 'the clap', gonorrhoea is spread by unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex and can infect the urethra, cervix, anus, throat and eyes. In men, symptoms include:

- thick, yellow or white discharge from the penis;
- pain or discomfort passing urine;
- redness around the opening of the penis;
- anal discharge and discomfort; and
- a sore, dry throat.

Fortunately, both chlamydia and gonorrhoea can be readily treated with antibiotics. If you have been diagnosed with either of these conditions, your sexual partners from the past three months should be notified so they can also be tested – however difficult it may be to let them know. Some people find it easier to write to deliver this type of news, rather than over the phone or in person.

More than 2000 cases of syphilis were also reported in 2004, most of these involving men.

There are three stages of syphilis infection: primary, secondary and latent. The first of these usually involves a hard, painless sore developing on the genitals or in the anus, mouth or cervix, between 10 and 90 days after infection. The absence of pain may mean this sore goes undetected.

Secondary syphilis kicks in two to four months after infection and, if untreated, can come and go for two years. Symptoms include a flat red rash on the back, chest, feet and hands; fever; swollen glands; hair loss; fatigue; and a genital rash. Syphilis is contagious during the primary stage but even more so when the rash is present.

If untreated after these two initial stages, syphilis may become latent and only detectable by blood testing. It is no longer infectious but, over time, can lead to severe problems with organs such as the heart and brain.

Anyone you had sexual contact with while symptoms were present should be tested for syphilis and treated, usually with penicillin.

Other relatively common STIs include genital herpes, genital warts and pubic lice. Bloodborne infections such as HIV and hepatitis can also be spread during sexual contact.

AIDS deaths have fallen over the past decade but new diagnoses of HIV infection in Australia increased between 2000 and 2004 (having fallen

significantly between 1995 and 2000). Most of these new cases involved men with a history of homosexual contact.

Use of condoms can minimise the risk of most STIs although this isn't a fail-safe as some infections, such as herpes, are spread through skin-to-skin contact during genital or oral sex.

If you have any concerns about your sexual health or that of your partner, it's worthwhile seeking STI checks from a doctor.

REFERENCES AND MORE INFORMATION:

- AUSTRALIA'S HEALTH 2006 (AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF HEALTH & WELFARE)
- [HTTP://WWW.MSHC.ORG.AU/](http://www.mshc.org.au/) (MELBOURNE SEXUAL HEALTH CENTRE)

Teenagers and STIs

What did your parents tell you about sexual health? Chances are, if the topic was tackled at all, it involved an awkward, all too brief conversation culminating in a book being handed over and a comment along the lines of "come and talk to me if you have any questions". All parties knew the follow-up conversation would never take place – possibly to the relief of both parents and kids!

If you were one of the lucky few to be subjected to sex education at school that was also likely to be awful – putting condoms on carrots or learning that balloons, aluminium foil and cling wrap are poor forms of contraception.

While teenagers today are likely to be better informed and have more info at their disposal, a conversation with a parent may be more important than ever.

A report in *Australian Doctor* warns that more teenagers are getting sexually transmitted infections (STIs). At the same time, doctors report fewer chances to discuss sexual health with young patients.

Most STIs can be treated once they are detected but failure to seek help can lead to long-term complications. If you have a chance to talk to your children, let them know that infections are easily passed from person to person during vaginal, anal or oral sex.

Used correctly, condoms can reduce the risk of infections. If there is any doubt about sexual health, getting an STI check from your doctor can put both partners' minds at rest.



In the eye of the storm ... dealing with conflict at home

“Men do need time to leave the stressful situation and do something to help them calm down. Women need to let them go even though it feels difficult.”

David Rackham is a mediator and trainer who works in the area of family relationships. Here, he shows us how some men respond to conflict, and his business partner, Ruth Richter, offers a few tips on avoiding a nasty fight.

Robert* was very frustrated and had come to see me because he had decided to take action about the fights he was having with his wife.

He told me that when he and his wife Sally started talking about an issue, it typically blew up into a fight. “I want to get out because I get really angry and I feel like I’m going to lose it. But when I leave the room she follows me. She goes on and on and just won’t leave me alone,” he said.

I wasn’t at all surprised by his story. Many men have experienced similar frustration. There is now very solid research that reveals the underlying causes for both Robert and Sally’s behaviour.

Men’s stress peaks as soon as they are in a fight or conflict. It is a very uncomfortable feeling and they want nothing more than to be alone and settle down. Then they are able to think clearly again and approach the matter calmly and in control.

Unfortunately, women’s stress peaks if the man leaves. So, to keep from feeling completely overwhelmed, she follows the man, trying to keep in touch.

A very difficult situation for both people! He needs some space to sort through what is happening and she needs to keep the contact happening.

It really helps if both the man and woman have some understanding of these basic responses that so many of us use without even realising. Understanding what’s happening then allows us to work through them. Men do need time to leave the stressful situation and do something to help them calm down. Women need to let them go even though it feels difficult.

It works better if men reassure women that they will be back when they leave. It is useful to say something like, “It’s important that we sort this out. I need some time to think it through. I’ll be out the back, come and get me in 10 minutes.”

Leaving the timing in the woman’s hands can make it a lot easier for her to let you have the time you need despite feeling stressed by your departure.

And for Robert? This information helped him work out what he was going to do and he left our consultation thinking about how he would tell Sally about his response.

*NOT THEIR REAL NAMES.

Five tips to avoid conflict:

- Get ready: practise what you are going to say to your partner so you remember it easily
- Set it up: talk with your partner about what you are going to say. Reassure her that you will come back and talk about it when you are calmer
- Go while you are still in control: recognise when you are getting angry, say what you have practised and leave while you can de-stress easily
- Do something physical to help de-stress: Go for a brisk walk around the block or kick a footy against a brick wall. What works for you?
- Work on solving the problem: think about what is important for your partner and what is important for you. When you go back, check that you’ve got it right.



From little things, big things grow

There's an old golfers' poem that states, "the big things count but the small things mount". It emphasises the importance of putting well, rather than just hitting massive, Tiger Woods-style tee shots. The same wisdom can be applied to our health.

All too often we ignore our health until something goes wrong. When we do have a health scare, the prospect of making massive changes to an established lifestyle can seem overwhelming.

The good news is that, like a careful tee shot, small lifestyle changes can make substantial improvements to your health scorecard.

The proof comes from a recently completed British study involving 20,244 men and women aged 45 to 79, with no known cardiovascular disease or cancer. Participants in the study were surveyed and given a score out of four, with one point for each of the following lifestyle choices:

- not smoking;
- being active (at least 30 minutes physical activity daily);
- moderate alcohol intake (one to 14 units of alcohol per week); and
- having blood levels of Vitamin C consistent with eating five or more servings of fruit and vegetables every day.

Now, if you haven't ticked all these boxes, making some minor lifestyle changes could be well worth your while. Drinking less alcohol, eating more fresh produce or getting away from work for a 30-minute walk every day can bring amazing results.

The University of Cambridge researchers followed-up with study participants after an average of 11 years and then adjusted their data to take into account differences in age, gender, body mass and social class.

There were 1,987 deaths over the course of the study – but people who received an initial score of four were four times less likely to have died early than those who scored zero.

Indeed, the researchers said the health benefits of combining those four lifestyle choices was the equivalent of being 14 years younger than those who scored zero!

People who had scored two points were two times less likely to have died over the course of the 11-year study. The risk of dying from cardiovascular disease fell significantly for every point scored.

Further research is required to confirm these results in other population groups but the basic message seems clear: minor, achievable lifestyle changes can have massive results.

For the record, a unit of alcohol was defined as a glass of wine, a shot of spirit or half a pint of beer (240ml). When it comes to drinking, moderation is always the magic word.

As for golf, don't stress too much if your tee shots and putts don't go exactly as planned. A regular stroll around a golf course will boost your cardiovascular health and time away from your daily routine will work wonders for your mental health too.

SOURCE:
COMBINED IMPACT OF HEALTH BEHAVIOURS AND MORTALITY IN MEN AND WOMEN: THE EPIC-NORFOLK PROSPECTIVE POPULATION STUDY. KHAW KT, WAREHAM N, BINGHAM S, WELCH A, LUBEN R, DAY N. PLOS MED. 2008 JAN 8;5(1):E12.

A case study

For 45-year-old researcher Gavin, the campaign to better health began with a single phone call. "I had reached 40 and fat seemed to have found me. So I cancelled the newspaper delivery and thought I'll walk the 500 metres to pick-up the paper".

From strolling to the newsagency, Gavin graduated to walking around the block – and then he got a taste for exercise.

"I started jogging, then added some push-ups and sit-ups and, over about a one-year period, established a routine. Now I have extended the distance to about five kilometres per day."

Increased muscle tone and a smaller waistline followed but the real benefits were less visible. During a recent cancer scare, Gavin says his improved fitness "certainly made the doctors happier" and assisted his recovery.

"The biggest difference, and the one that pays the biggest dividend, is that I am happier and I don't get as depressed as quickly," he says. "I can respond under pressure better, and I find the time jogging is when I think of really creative solutions to research issues that are challenging me.

"Also I find the time alone early in the morning is a great time for me to have alone, just me and my thoughts. It's a bit like symbolically being in a shed and that's also good.

"In fact (this change) has had a wonderful impact on my mental wellbeing. I'm happier for it and that has brought benefits in my work and home life."



Fast facts

- Foundation 49 is an initiative of Cabrini Health
- It aims to help all men over 20 years of age – of all cultures and socio-economic backgrounds
- Widespread screening and health promotion are key goals
- We believe supporting men to take control of their health is vital
- Our Decades of Life project is a tool for all men and for health professionals to help them assess a patient's risk of disease, to avoid illnesses and to assist in making early diagnoses of physical and mental problems.

Foundation 49.
Promoting Health
Awareness in Men

183 Wattleree Rd,
Malvern, 3144

Tel: 03 9508 1567
Fax: 03 9508 1071
Email: admin@49.com.au
Web: www.49.com.au

Foundation 49
a Cabrini Health Initiative

Five minutes with... Matt Tilley



Spotted by a talent scout making a 21st birthday speech for a friend, Matt Tilley was plucked from a law course to kick off what has been a highly successful 16-year career in breakfast radio (so far). The renowned telephone prankster has donated much of the proceeds from his three smash-hit Cereal Pest albums to hospitals and other charitable causes.

What's the secret to appearing so bouncy and upbeat on air?

I wish there was a secret. I don't do coffee at work for fear of addiction but it is my afternoon guilty pleasure. After one espresso it's nice to have your little kids tell you to calm down for a change.

What is your favorite meal and where do you enjoy it?

This is a question you might get on death row! Um, my wife is an amazing cook but a favorite is her herb and lemon crusted bread with minestrone in front of the footy on a Friday night. I make my own pesto with home-grown basil and if I can detect all the slugs before the blender that tastes quite nice as well.

When was your last health check?

Had a full medical just before Christmas. Was nervous about the prostate test but the doctor took me out to dinner first so it was okay. Happy to report I passed with flying colors... and got his phone number.

Biggest health challenge faced?

Probably meningitis as a kid. Was in Fairfield infectious diseases hospital for months. I also weighed 106kg at Uni and am now down to 75... just getting out of a servo without a Twix bar is a challenge!

Best health tip you've been given?

Exercise is the cheapest and safest form of anti-depressant.

What do you do to stay healthy?

I start the day with fruit and fresh veggie juices. Am a bit of an exercise freak when it comes to running and cycling though God has not blessed me with the physiology to be any good at it. Did a few marathons last year and you could hear my chaffing thighs in China.