

Member News

Reserve Bank Health Society newsletter
April 2019 | Issue 17



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simply better benefits

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Public wait times reveal private value

A timely reminder why we think you should have and retain a quality hospital cover like the one provided by Reserve Bank Health Society.

One of the biggest drivers of Australians taking up private hospital cover is the health of the public hospital system – specifically planned (elective) surgery waiting times.

A key advantage of having private hospital cover is that you can get your planned surgery done in a private hospital with the doctor of your choice as soon as your doctor is ready (the turnaround is usually quick).

Private health cover is designed to take the planned surgery load off the public system and it does this pretty well.

Planned surgeries in public hospitals as a public patient naturally are not as urgent as emergency admissions and are prioritised accordingly (although planned surgeries do have clinically recommended timeframes to operate under). The private system is generally much faster.

Waiting times for planned surgery in public hospital

There is plenty of public hospital data to explore.

The overall median (the midpoint) waiting period for planned surgery in public hospitals rose to 40 days in the year to 30 June 2018, up two days on the year before.

NSW residents may not be surprised to learn that their median waiting times are the highest in Australia, at 55 days (a rise from 54 days in 2017).

This wait can be hard for patients to bear, especially if their quality of life is not what it could be. In fact, 20,000 odd patients in Australia left public waiting lists to be treated in private hospitals in 2018.

Cataract surgery, removing cloudy eye lenses that can occur in older people, was the most common public planned surgery in 2018 with 72,000 patients admitted. The median wait time for cataract surgery in public hospitals is 86 days (with half waiting longer than that).

Here are a few public hospital planned surgery waiting times in 2018.

You could be waiting:

- 57+ days for a hysterectomy (up from 55 days in 2017)
- 101+ to have varicose veins stripped (up from 90+ in 2017)
- 119+ days for a total hip replacement (up from 110+ days in 2017)
- 121+ days to have tonsils removed (up from 97+ days in 2017)
- 198+ days for a total knee replacement (up from 195+ days in 2017)

And 50% of people will wait even longer than that.

With private health cover, you'll be in a private hospital as soon as your doctor's ready.

Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 'Elective surgery waiting times 2017-18; Australian hospital statistics'

Can you eat your way to happiness?

You may be surprised to learn that eating can have a positive effect on your brain chemistry, and that is ultimately the release anyone wants under the stranglehold of depression or anxiety. And no, ice cream is not one of the good ones, so that tub of ice cream can stay in the freezer.

Food for happiness

Folate

Low folate levels are linked to depression. So, there is no harm in getting on top of your recommended folate intake. Also, folate improves the effectiveness of antidepressant drugs.

Folate can be found naturally in vegies such as leafy greens, legumes, rice, avocado, fruit and, strangely, liver.

One in 12 Australian women do not eat enough folate according to Australian Bureau of Statistics figures released in 2015, while folate deficiency is less common in men.

Amino acids

Tryptophan is an amino acid that is used by nerve cells in the brain to make serotonin, the happy chemical, and melatonin, a hormone that increases sleep quality and length.

As tryptophan is present in proteins, these protein-rich foods are good sources: eggs, milk, fish, meat, poultry, dairy, seeds and legumes.

beyondblue recommends two to three servings of oily fish a week for your omega-3s too.

Water

While technically not food, hydration is important too. Apparently even minor dehydration causes us to lose some mental control.

Take a water bottle to your next meeting to keep a lid on your worsening mood, irritability and restlessness.

Reducing sugar

Sugar comes with its own false highs and lows that can interfere with your life. Stick to low GI foods that keep your blood sugar levels steady.

Limiting caffeine

Caffeine-rich drinks are more popular than ever. They are not without their risks however. beyondblue recommends limiting yourself to 2 coffees per day or zero for people with anxiety.

Unfortunately some of the side effects of going cold turkey on a caffeine addiction are depression and headaches. Luckily, these symptoms are usually temporary and most people who kick the habit are over the worst of it in 3 days.

Help for mental health

RBHS members with hospital cover have free access to their own personal mental health expert through the Strive for Health program. The service provides an invaluable guide through the mental health system over the course of six months.

If you have a health condition and would like to find out if the program is right for you, please call us on 1800 027 299 or send us an email at info@myrbhs.com.au

Source: beyondblue



How to stop tech affecting your health

The evidence is in. The more you use social media, the more depressed you are likely to be. Plus, the research into screen time shows that looking at your phone at night can disrupt your body's natural sleep signals. The result is less sleep, higher incidence of poor mental health and lower concentration levels.

So how could you tackle this pervasive problem?

Here are some tips to reduce your screen time and retrieve your happiness.

1. No phone use after dinner

We know it sounds difficult, but we all need safe boundaries in life. Your body needs to know it is night-time to wind your mind down ready for sleep.

If you have ever tried to sleep with a whirring mind, you know why this is important.

At night, to stream video content, use your television (Chromecast and Apple TV are popular solutions for this), at least this way you will be sitting farther away from the light.

2. Set your work alarms on repeat

Using your phone before bed to set your alarm is worth avoiding. Otherwise you will suffer from a hit of disruptive blue light.

Set your phone alarm to a routine weekly alarm and have it on repeat so that you never have to think about it again. Another option is to use a traditional bedside alarm clock.

3. Charge your phone away from your bed

If your phone is not at reach at night, you will be less likely to grab for it.

This one relates to alarms too. When you have been inconvenienced enough to get out of bed to turn off your alarm you will be on your feet and less likely to begin the day online.

4. Manage your notification settings.

The default settings on most social media platforms can be intrusive. A notification should be something important, otherwise, it is best to be left alone.

Actions:

- only accept notifications from people
- turn off notifications to your email (or set up a new email address to link your social media accounts to and never check it)
- turn off notifications to group chat groups, you can check those at your leisure

5. Use voice messages

For most of us, typing is slow. Speaking is quick.

Not only is this a time-saver, it means you do not have to look at your phone, you can just speak in to it. Do it!

6. Go black and white

Most late model phones have a grayscale setting to change the image display to black and white. Colours are stimuli to the brain, so getting rid of them could help bring further calm to your brain and help reduce your technology addiction.

Grayscale on most phones is in Settings/Accessibility/Vision/Grayscale or Colour Filters



Quick health quiz

1. Don't get enough exercise?
2. Are you overweight?
3. Do you have an unhealthy diet?

If you answered yes to all three, you could be at risk of heart disease (the biggest single killer of Australians), diabetes and more.*



Many of us let our health go for periods, but you can take action today by joining our Strive for Health program at no cost to you. Strive for Health is complimentary on your hospital cover.

Slash your risk of preventable health conditions and feel the benefits of a healthier routine. Could that benefit you?

Check your risks and if the program is right for you by completing a quick 15-minute Health Risk Assessment here myrbhs.com.au/Members/Health-Programs

*Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018, Causes of Death, and The Heart Foundation.

Are you claiming the easy way?

Claiming is easier than ever with the RBHS Mobile Claiming app. To submit your extra claims on-the-spot, simply download the app onto your smartphone or tablet, set up your membership details and take a photo of the receipt for your extras service.

Our Mobile Claiming app is the quickest way to submit your claim and allows you to receive your benefits sooner.

For more information, instructions and to download the app onto your Apple or Android device, visit www.myrbhs.com.au/claimapp.



Selected natural therapies removed

Remember, from 1 April 2019, all health funds are not allowed to cover a range of natural therapies due to Federal Government changes to private health insurance.

This means we no longer cover Bowen therapy, naturopathy consultations, Western herbalism, homeopathy, Pilates, reflexology and yoga benefits on our Premium Extras cover.

Rest assured you can continue to claim benefits on remedial massage and acupuncture after 1 April 2019 on our Premium Extras cover.



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