

## Other illnesses

Women get diabetes, heart disease, lung cancer, bowel cancers and melanomas just the same as men. These illnesses are either preventable or more amenable to treatment if detected early. If you are aged over 50 years we encourage you to have a full medical check rather than just a women's health check at least every 2 years. Younger women may also need regular checks for other problems - in particular skin cancers.

## Well woman's clinic

For women with no gynaecological symptoms but who are in need of a routine check up we offer an alternative to seeing your doctor. Our experienced sister Louise Powers can do your routine well women check including your pap smear and this will be bulk billed. If you have gynae symptoms or you require other services such as prescriptions it is not appropriate to see Louise – you need to see your doctor. Ask the receptionist if you want an appointment for the well woman's clinic.

## The menopause 45-60 years

Heavy or painful periods are common as the menopause approaches and may need further investigation. If you are feeling tired you may be anaemic and need a blood test. Any women whose periods have stopped for more than 6 months and who then starts bleeding again may need investigation as this may sometimes be a sign of uterine cancer (although it usually isn't).

The menopause itself is a very variable event, causing some women only minor symptoms whilst others are disabled by flushes and other symptoms. Lifestyle modification can help but unfortunately most natural products do not work. We do still use hormone replacement therapy for severe symptoms and that works well for most women. However it is important to discuss possible side effects and duration of treatment before commencing therapy. Menopausal women may also experience problems with their libido and if this is an issue for you we encourage you to discuss it with your doctor.

## Women aged 60+

We encourage women to continue with pap smears until the age of 70 as per guidelines. You are not 'too old' for a pap smear after 70, its just that cervical cancer becomes rarer in women who have had regular pap smears as they get older and is very unlikely in the over 70s.

On the other hand breast cancer gets commoner as you get older and we strongly encourage 70+ women who are otherwise fit to continue having regular mammograms.

Older women commonly have urinary problems but are often too embarrassed to talk to their doctor about it or they believe nothing can be done. This is not the case; we can help most women but can't cure everybody. So if you have waterwork problems, see your doctor and get them sorted out.

## Shoal Bay and Anna Bay Medical Centres

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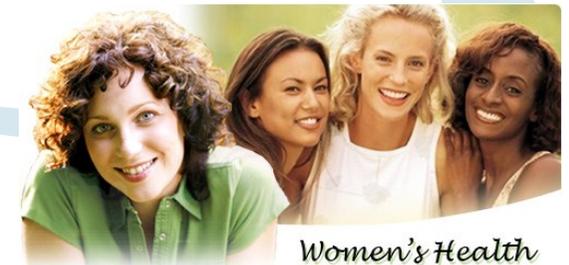
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SHOAL BAY & ANNA BAY  
MEDICAL CENTRES

# Women's Health



*Women's Health*

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

# Women's Health

**Our practice has always had a strong involvement with women's health.**

Women have many health problems in common with men but this brochure deals with issues unique to women.

## Younger women

We can help with period problems, dietary problems, acne, contraception, sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy management.

We offer a wide range of contraceptive choices, including the pill, long acting injections, subcutaneous implants (Implanon - Drs Don Leitch, Ros Leitch, Daniel Priest, Jodie Yapp, Denisa Robinson, Trina Eldridge, Kamal Kaur), intra uterine devices (IUDs - Drs Peter Romero, Daniel Priest, Denisa Robinson and Jodie Yapp), morning after pills and diaphragms inserts (Dr Ros Leitch).

We offer comprehensive and private assessment of sexually transmitted infection (STI).

In our community Chlamydia, herpes and genital warts are by far the most common STI's. Chlamydia infection often cause minor or no symptoms (but can lead to infertility in later life) but is easy to treat. Herpes causes painful ulcers and genital warts are usually obvious, although the wart (HPV) virus may not cause warts.

**Guideline:** All women who are sexually active between the ages of 16 and 25 should have an annual test for Chlamydia (a simple urine test).

Pap smears can be a little uncomfortable but generally not as bad as women who have never had one expect them to be.

**Guideline:** All women over 18 who have ever had sex are advised to have a Pap smear every two years, even if they no longer have sex.

For personal reasons some doctors are uncomfortable about or opposed to termination of pregnancy. As a practice we do not dictate beliefs to our doctors. If you are considering termination you may wish to talk to a nurse first and she will direct you to a doctor who refers for termination. If your doctor is uncomfortable about referring for termination they will refer on to a colleague within the practice and there will be no extra cost to you.

## Women aged 18-45

We offer ongoing assistance as outlined above. We also provide help with pre pregnancy planning and pregnancy care.

## Pregnancy

Our patients generally deliver at the John Hunter, Newcastle Private or Maitland hospitals. We will guide you through your pregnancy along a pathway of your individual choice. For example you may elect to have a private specialist, midwife or standard hospital delivery.

**Tip:** If you are planning on becoming pregnant we like to see you before the event if at all possible. Then we can assess any particular risk with your pregnancy, predict potential problems and plan management

We provide advice to and appropriate referrals for investigations and specialist opinion to women who are finding it hard to fall pregnant and have close contacts with the local experts.

## Routine checks

During your routine check ups you will be provided with advice about breast examination and breast disease, particularly cancer. When to start regular screening for breast cancer is a contentious issue. We do sometimes see younger women with breast cancer but their risk is lower than older women.

The national mammography program aims to screen all women aged 50 -70 every 2 years with a free mammogram examination.

The program will screen women aged 40-50 and over 70 years if they or their doctor requests it AND they have the resources available. They will not remind you when your mammogram is due if you are outside their target age group. At the moment it is pretty easy for women outside the target group to get a free screen but at times in the past it has been impossible.

**Tip:** If you have a family history of breast (or indeed any) cancer it is very important that you discuss that with your doctor. You may be at higher risk and normal screening rules may not apply.

**Tip:** Never ignore a symptom. Whether or not you have had a screening mammogram within the last 2 years any persisting breast lump or breast pain or change in your breasts needs to be sorted out. See your doctor- Don't wait until your next routine appointment!

Routine pap smears should continue during your adult years unless you have had a hysterectomy.

## What about Ovarian Cancer?

This is a serious and difficult question. With most women having regular pap smears ovarian cancer has become a more common problem than cervical cancer. Unfortunately no screening program has been shown to save lives, although a number of different approaches are currently under trial and a valid test may become available in the next few years. In the meantime **never ignore a symptom!** In particular if you have pelvic or lower abdominal pain or bloating this needs to be checked out. Unexplained bleeding also needs to be diagnosed as it may herald uterine cancer.