



NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2026

Kia ora koutou - warm New Year greetings to the Millhouse community and other readers.

With the holiday season behind us and Auckland easing into its sunniest months (fingers crossed), this is the perfect time for safe doses of sunshine in February and March. Keep building those vitamin D stores - they're your secret weapon for strong bones, muscles, and immunity heading into winter. Soak up these last precious days of summer!

MANAGE MY HEALTH

Manage My Health, our online portal for sharing your health information, has [made headlines](#) due to a major security breach. We're advised it affected 50 people registered with Millhouse Medical Centre, and Health New Zealand is collaborating with government agencies to support the platform and protect users. To stay secure, please log into your account, update your password, and enable two-factor authentication—which adds a simple identity check via text or email. If you're concerned or want to chat more, reach out to our medical team or your family doctor at no charge for phone or in-person consultations.

Manage My Health is also trying to reset the patient test result notification that was also affected.

ONE-YEAR PRESCRIPTIONS

Starting 1 February, the [1-year prescription option](#) will be introduced to help reduce medical costs, but it will only be used where it is safe and appropriate. This will generally apply when your medical condition is stable, your medicines are unchanged for 1-year, and key health markers such as blood pressure, weight, and blood tests are within agreed targets. It is not suitable for complex conditions, people on many medications, or those taking controlled medicines such as opioids, benzodiazepines, or stimulants, or where there are concerns about medication misuse.

Discuss with your doctor or nurse practitioner whether a 1-year prescription is right for you. Please make a face-to-face appointment to see if you may qualify for 12 months, or if a 9-month or 6 month or if a 3month prescription would be more appropriate, with your safety remaining the top priority.



MILLHOUSE NEWS

We're still on the lookout for a new GP or Nurse Practitioner to lighten the load—huge thanks for bearing with us while we keep things running smoothly and personally for you.

If something urgent comes up and you can't access an immediate online booking, please ring Reception. Our nurses are ready to chat, sort a quick slot, or even loop in St John for a ride to Middlemore ED if it's serious.

CANCEL EARLY TO HELP OTHERS

Life happens, but if you can't make your appointment, please let Reception know as soon as possible. This opens up spots for folks with urgent needs - and just a heads-up, there's a service charge if we aren't notified in time. Your understanding keeps care accessible for everyone.

MAKE THE MOST OF CONSULTS

We are here to give your health the focus it needs. Our standard 15-minute slots work great for one or two issues, letting us dive deep without rushing. Got a longer list or something that needs extra time? Book a double appointment—we do charge more for it, but it means we can unpack everything properly, stay on schedule, and get your health concerns sorted. Thanks for teaming up with us!

NEW STRENGTH & BALANCE CLASSES COMING SOON

Exciting news—these fun sessions to boost your strength, balance, and confidence are kicking off shortly. Perfect for staying steady as winter nears. Keen to join? Chat with Reception or one of our medical team to grab your spot.

And don't forget our in-house gems:

Rebecca, your Health Coach for real-talk on sleep, chilling out, and lifestyle changes for weight management, improved diabetic control or blood pressure.

Vani, your Health Improvement Practitioner guiding you through mental health, substances, emotions, or chronic stuff in a short, focused consultation.

Both work closely with our medical team and are totally free.

How Dogs May Help Teens Feel Happier Even Through Their Microbes!

Have you ever noticed how teenagers who grow up with dogs often seem more relaxed and socially confident? Scientists have been curious about why this happens — and [recent research](#) offers a surprising clue.

A study with over 300 teenagers found that those who owned dogs reported better mental well-being than those who didn't. They had fewer emotional and behavioural problems and scored higher on measures of social connection and happiness.

But this wasn't just about cuddles or companionship — it may also involve something microscopic: the microbiome. Our homes, skin, and even our guts are home to billions of helpful microbes. Living with dogs changes the types of microbes that live in the home, and those microbes can influence our immune system and even our mood.

In this study, scientists looked at the types of microbes found in dog-owning teens and then did something clever — they transplanted those microbes into special laboratory mice. The mice who received "dog-loving teen" microbes became more social and friendlier toward other mice.

Some of the helpful bacteria, especially a group called *Streptococcus*, seemed to link both the teens' mental well-being and the mice's social behaviour. This suggests that having a dog may boost mood not only through companionship and activity but also through subtle microbial changes in our environment and gut.

So, the next time your dog greets you at the door or insists on a walk, remember — the bond goes deeper than you think.

Those wagging tails may be helping shape happier, more balanced teens, inside and out!



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FASTING - YOUR SWITCH-FLIPPING TOOL

In [recent newsletters](#), I explored why losing excess weight can be so challenging — our bodies are biologically wired to store energy as fat during times of plenty, anticipating a “winter of scarcity” that often never arrives. The widespread rise in obesity and diabetes mirrors our increased intake of white sugar (50% glucose 50% fructose) and from high-fructose corn syrup (about 55% fructose). Because the liver preferentially converts fructose into fat, rather than using it for immediate energy, this sets the stage for body fat accumulation. To make matters worse, during periods of stress, dehydration, low oxygen, low blood pressure, or excessive refined carbohydrate intake — and even in diabetes — the liver can generate additional fructose, further encouraging visceral fat accumulation.

I also discussed Wegovy, a GLP-1 agonist that’s become a leading option for weight loss, outlining its mechanism and possible side effects. We looked at how slow, mindful eating — especially meals rich in fibre and bitter foods — can naturally boost the body’s own GLP-1 for lasting satiety. Finally, I introduced the work of [Dr Jason Fung](#) (*The Obesity Code*, *The Diabetes Code*), who argues that long-term weight gain and type 2 diabetes stem less from excess calories and more from persistently high insulin levels and resulting insulin resistance (what he calls the “hormone theory of obesity.”) It’s not only refined carbohydrates that drive insulin up, but also chronic stress and poor sleep, both of which raise cortisol and blood glucose; in the sidebar I have highlighted how endocrine-disrupting chemicals may further sabotage weight control.

LOWER INSULIN LEVELS

In the short term, many diets can help with weight loss, but after 6–12 months results often plateau. That’s because the hypothalamus — the brain’s weight-regulating centre — has determined a “set weight,” sometimes described as a *fat thermostat*. Once this set point is reached, the body resists further weight loss by slowing metabolism and increasing appetite.

Obesity is fundamentally a disorder of fat regulation driven by insulin. The key objective in lasting weight loss is therefore to lower insulin levels by following these principles:

- If you’re not hungry, don’t eat.
- Reduce added sugars, especially fructose — check food labels carefully. Avoid snacks, sugary breakfast cereals and desserts, soft drinks, and fruit juices.
- Limit refined and processed grains such as pasta, rice, white or even wholegrain bread, and commercial bakery products. Instead, choose quinoa, chia seeds, or fibre-rich beans.
- Consume protein in moderation.
- Increase healthy fats like olive oil, nuts, avocado, and sources of dietary fibre, which both slow digestion and blunt insulin’s effects. Adding vinegar to meals also helps smooth insulin spikes.
- Eat organic foods where possible and prepare more meals at home.

To truly break the insulin-resistance cycle, we need recurrent periods of low insulin. Eating low-insulin foods helps prevent rises, but only fasting effectively lowers insulin levels and resets the body’s metabolic signals.

FASTING – ANCIENT & NEW

Fasting is one of the oldest healing practices and remains the most effective and consistent way to lower insulin levels. After about six hours without food, insulin begins to fall and the body starts converting stored protein into glucose. Between one and three days, fat stores are broken down into fatty acids and ketones, which fuel the brain, while glycerol is converted to glucose. By five days, growth hormone rises to preserve lean muscle and increase fat use, while adrenaline boosts metabolic rate. Studies show that a four-day fast can raise energy expenditure by up to 14%, in sharp contrast to calorie restriction, which slows metabolism.

If you have diabetes or complex medical conditions, discuss any fasting plan with your doctor or nurse practitioner. Do not fast if you are underweight and visit [Dr Jason Fung’s website](#) for practical guidance on the *when*, *what*, and the *how* of fasting.

Ma te wa - yours in good health
Dr Richard J Coleman

TOXIC “SWITCH FLIPPERS”

CHEMICALS MAKE WEIGHT LOSS HARDER

University of California Professor Robert Lustig warns that endocrine-disrupting chemicals (obesogens) sabotage weight loss by hijacking hormones, expanding fat cells, disrupting appetite signals, slowing metabolism, and worsening insulin resistance.

Common culprits:

Bisphenol A (in plastics/can linings): mimics estrogen, boosts fat storage.

Phthalates (fragrances/soft plastics): impair thyroid/sex hormones, raise BMI.

Pesticides (e.g. DDT & organochlorines): stored in fat, disrupt insulin, link to obesity.

Lustig’s take-home message: if your hormones and metabolism are being quietly distorted by these “obesogenic” chemicals, simply cutting calories may not be enough; reducing exposure (glass over plastic, fewer ultra-processed foods, low-toxin household and personal-care products) becomes another important lever for flipping your metabolic switch back toward health.

Where to begin

- Refrain from snacking.
- Don’t eat if you are not hungry.
- Try missing breakfast.
- Try 5:2 diet as advocated by Michael Mosley [‘The Fast Diet’](#).
- Try intermittent fasting for 15-18 hours & restrict eating to a 8 hour period.
- Try a 36 hour fast - no meals for one day & miss breakfast.
- Dr Fung is an advocate of 36 hour fasts 2-3x week.

For more information visit Dr Fung’s website - *Resource Section* - for articles and videos.