



MILLHOUSE INTEGRATIVE MEDICAL CENTRE

PARTNERING IN HEALTH AND HEALING

NEWSLETTER MAY - JUNE 2026

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

Welcome to this month's newsletter. In our community we are still seeing a steady mix of respiratory infections, including Covid-19, seasonal influenza, and RSV, and these remain common reasons for respiratory-related hospital admissions, especially in older adults and people with underlying health conditions. Most infections are mild, but vaccination, prompt testing, good hand hygiene, and staying home when unwell continue to play an important role in protecting the more vulnerable.

If you haven't had your flu vaccination yet, our clinic has now run out of stock. You can still get immunised by visiting Pharmacist Philip at Millhouse Pharmacy.



Recent reports of hantavirus on an Antarctic cruise were a reminder that not all serious infections are the ones we hear about most often. We are more familiar with Covid-19, norovirus, and legionella, but rodent-borne infections can also cause significant illness.

Don't forget to support your immunity, especially when on vacation. Consider vitamin D, which helps modulate immune function. Keep some Betadine (10% povidone-iodine) on hand — dilute 1:20 for an early gargle or nasal rinse at the first sign of any infection, including Covid and hantavirus. When I travel, I take a 100 mL bottle of Betadine, tightly wrapped in two plastic bags, ready to use if needed at the first sign of respiratory illness. Zinc and quercetin may also enhance innate defences.

This simple infection-prevention measure also serves as a powerful reminder that the everyday lifestyle habits—outlined clearly in the text box opposite—offer a straightforward path to extending your healthy lifespan.

Overleaf: The COVID-19 pandemic introduced us to messenger RNA (mRNA), used in vaccines to prompt an immune response.

Beyond this, there is growing interest in microRNAs— very much smaller regulatory molecules than mRNA - that influence gene expression. In this newsletter I briefly explore the influences of microRNA in human health.

MILLHOUSE NEWS

WELCOME TO Liz Menzel our new Health Improvement Practitioner. Liz is a highly experienced practitioner who has spent many years working across health and social services. She is passionate about supporting people to better understand their health and well-being, and to develop strategies for creating balance in their lives. Liz works with patients to manage emotional well-being, reduce negative thoughts patterns, build resilience and inner calm and foster greater day-to-day peace and balance. Liz is available daily, with extended hours on two evenings each week.



To book an appointment to see Liz please call Reception.

NEW WAITING ROOM SIGNS

Please note:
A 15-min Appointment
Allows time for only
1 complex problem
OR
1-3 simple issues
Thank you

'15-min Appointment' A standard 15-minute appointment is designed to address one complex issue or two or three minor issues. If you have multiple problems or more involved concerns, we recommend booking a longer (double) appointment. While there is an additional cost, this allows us to explore your concerns thoroughly, stay on schedule, and provide the best possible care. Thank you for helping us keep appointments running smoothly.

'Our Clinic Is Using AI Note Taking Tools' to help accurately document your consultation. These tools transcribe conversations in real time to support clinic records. No audio recording is stored, and your privacy remains a top priority.

EASTCARE EXTENDED HOURS If you require after-hours urgent medical care Eastcare A&E is now open till 1am each morning.

ONE-YEAR PRESCRIPTIONS may be appropriate when your condition is stable, your medications have been unchanged for at least a year, and your key health markers (such as blood pressure, weight, and blood tests) are within agreed targets. These prescriptions are not suitable for patients with complex medical conditions, patients on multiple medications, or those taking controlled drugs such as opioids, benzodiazepines, or stimulants.

They are also not appropriate where there are concerns about safety. Our *Repeat Prescription Policy* can be viewed online on the Millhouse Medical website at <https://irp.cdn-website.com/10ea140b/files/uploaded/Millhouse-Medical-Extended-Repeat-Prescription-Policy-25.3.pdf>.

SIMPLE DAILY HABITS MEAN LIVING LONGER

The EPIC-Norfolk UK study following over 20,000 people for more than a decade found that just **four simple daily habits** were linked with **up to 14 extra years of life** compared with people who had none of them. These habits were:

- Not smoking
- Being physically active
- Drinking alcohol in moderation (or not at all)
- Eating 5 or more servings of fruit and vegetables daily

Each healthy habit adds up.

Even doing **one or two** of these things was associated with a meaningful drop in the risk of early death.

Later research from the same study showed it is **never too late to benefit**. People who became more active in mid-life and older age still lived longer and had lower risks of heart disease, cancer, and early death than those who stayed inactive. Measures like stronger grip, better ability to rise from a chair, and feeling more energetic were also linked with better survival, highlighting the importance of staying mobile and maintaining everyday strength.

Take-home message: Long-term health and longevity are not about perfection. They are about stacking small, sustainable habits—moving more, not smoking, eating more plants, and protecting your energy and strength—knowing that each one adds years to a healthier life.



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MicroRNA

Your DNA is like the book of life—a set of instructions that tells your body how to build and maintain itself. When I was training as a doctor, we thought of DNA as a fixed code that never changed. We now know it's much more dynamic than that!

Here's how it works in simple terms: Your DNA sends messages to your cells by copying a small section into **messenger RNA (mRNA)**. This messenger RNA then tells the cell to make **proteins**—the building blocks that do most of the work in your body.

When scientists mapped the entire human genome, they discovered something surprising; only about **2%** of our DNA makes proteins. For years, the other **98%** was called "junk DNA." Now we know much of it has important functions! One exciting discovery is **microRNA**—tiny molecules that help **control** how much protein gets made. Think of microRNA as a 'volume knob' that can turn protein production up or down. A single micro-RNA can silence thousands of different genes and even more amazing, microRNA floats around in your blood and other body fluids, transported in tiny bubbles, called exosomes, through the cells. MicroRNAs probably regulate all body processes essential for health.



In 2024, the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine was awarded to two Americans, Victor Ambros and Gary Ruvkun, for their 1993 discovery in nematode worms that tiny pieces of RNA, which they called microRNAs, play a key role in controlling and regulating gene activity in animals and plants.

Plants have thrived for billions of years and share deep evolutionary connections with humans through many fundamental cellular processes (we about 20% of our genes with the banana). When stressed, plants produce an array of beneficial chemicals known as phytonutrients, which go far beyond simple vitamins and antioxidants. Polyphenols—especially in organically-grown coloured fruits and vegetables—act as "lifespan-essential" compounds by supporting cellular health and longevity. In the last decade, researchers have recognised that plant-derived microRNAs (often called xenomiRs) can survive digestion, reach the gut, and may even enter the circulation to target human genes involved in metabolism, immunity, and even cancer suppression.

Recent studies have identified specific plant-derived microRNAs that appear to reach human tissues after certain foods have been eaten. For example, microRNAs from **ginger** may reduce inflammation and help protect against colon cancer, while **ginseng** microRNAs could influence immune function. MicroRNAs from **rice** and **wheat** have been detected in human blood after eating these grains, with some evidence they affect cholesterol and lipid metabolism. **Cabbage** and other cruciferous vegetables contain microRNAs that may interact with genes linked to detoxification and cancer prevention.

While research is still emerging, these findings suggest that plant microRNAs act as natural "gene regulators," working alongside polyphenols to support metabolism, immune balance, and long-term health. This adds a new layer to the benefit of a colorful, plant-rich diet: it delivers tiny regulatory molecules that may help fine-tune our own genes.

Cow's milk & human breast milk. Cow's milk and human breast milk both contain microRNAs, with miR-148a being the most abundant in both. Researchers at the University of Nebraska demonstrated that 3–4 hours after drinking cow's milk, bovine microRNAs could be detected in human blood using high-sensitivity testing. miR-148a is a key regulator that inhibits the mTOR pathway, which, when overactive, can accelerate aging and promote growth. Cows bred for high lactation have exaggerated levels of miR-148a; a calf can double its birth weight in about 40 days, roughly four times faster than a human infant. This raises concern that continuous exposure to bovine microRNA-containing exosomes may increase the risk of chronic diseases, ranging from acne and obesity to diabetes and cancer.

Bacterial fermentation of cow's milk appears to break down exosomes and microRNAs; this may explain why men and women in Sweden who drank fresh milk had higher mortality than those who consumed fermented milk. In contrast, breastfeeding in humans provides clear physical benefits, including a lower incidence of childhood illnesses such as gastroenteritis, pneumonia, and asthma.

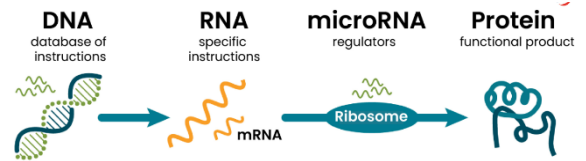
The best-understood functional role of breast milk microRNAs in infant nutrition is the regulation of immune system development. This is supported by evidence that specific microRNAs in human milk are involved in immune system development and regulation. By looking for microRNAs with known functions, researchers have also identified roles for these molecules in neurodevelopment, suggesting they may help guide the growth and maturation of the infant brain.

This is only the beginning of the microRNA story.

Ma te wa - yours in good health

Dr Richard J Coleman

General Reference: 'How Not to Age' by Dr Michael Gregor MD (2023)



TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

- **MicroRNA is a tiny but powerful gene regulator** inside every cell.
- It does **not make proteins**; it **controls** which genes are active and how strong they are.
- MicroRNAs are essential for **growth, development, metabolism, immunity, and aging**.
- When microRNAs are out of balance, they can contribute to **cancer, heart disease, autoimmune disease**, and more.
- New research suggests that **microRNAs from food**, especially milk, may enter our bloodstream and possibly affect our genes, but more study is needed.
- Understanding microRNA helps scientists develop **new tests and treatments** for many diseases.
- **There is still much more to know about microRNAs**