



February 2026 Dogs and Teens, and more on Fasting



Kia ora koutou - warm New Year greetings to the Millhouse community and other readers. This holiday season has been one of desperate sadness and we send condolences to all families affected by the tragic deaths at the Mount and in other parts of the motu.

As we enter our sunniest months, keep yourself safe as you enjoy the outdoors and build those vitamin D stores - they're our secret weapon for strong bones, muscles, and immunity heading into winter.

MANAGE MY HEALTH

Manage My Health, our online portal for sharing your health information, has [made headlines](#) due to a major security breach. 50 people registered with Millhouse Medical Centre were affected and government agencies are working 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 still concerned, reach out to our medical team or your family doctor.

MILLHOUSE NEWS

We are still recruiting for a new GP or Nurse Practitioner, but we need your help to keep the clinic running smoothly. For an urgent appointment, call Reception; our nurses can assist with scheduling or coordinating transport to Middlemore. If you need to cancel an appointment, we do appreciate at least two hours notice; this helps streamline patient services. Remember too that our standard 15-minute consultations are intended to cover one or two issues; if you have a longer list

In this newsletter:

- Manage My Health Data Breach
- 12 month prescriptions for some patients
- Strength and Balance classes coming soon
- Still seeking new doctor
- If cancelling, call early to streamline Reception in these busy times
- Research shows dog-owning teens are happier!

and this month
Dr Ric continues his reports on
Obesity, Insulin and Fasting

or need extra time, book a double appointment—we do charge more for it, but it means we can unpack your concerns properly, and stay on schedule for everyone.

New Strength and Balance classes as well as the free support services from our Health Coach and Health Improvement Practitioner are all part of getting your health concerns sorted.

Dogs may help Teens feel Happier

Teenagers who grow up with dogs often seem more relaxed and socially confident. [Recent research](#) by curious scientists 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, with fewer emotional and behavioural problems and higher levels of social connection and happiness.

This isn't just about cuddles or companionship — it may also involve the microbiome, the billions of helpful microbes that live in our homes, on our skin, and in our guts. Living with dogs changes the types of microbes in the home, and those microbes can influence our immune system and even our mood. In the study, scientists took microbes found in dog-owning teens and transplanted them into laboratory mice. The mice who received these "dog-loving teen" microbes became more social and friendlier toward other mice.

Some helpful bacteria, especially a group called *Streptococcus*, seemed to connect the teens' mental well-being with 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.

This Month's Focus - Obesity, Insulin, and Fasting

This month Dr Ric continues his reports on the role of insulin in obesity, notes that some toxic chemicals can undermine your weight loss efforts, and recommends the ancient-modern practice of fasting. Here's an extract:

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.
- Eat organic foods where possible and prepare more meals at home.

Eating low-insulin foods helps prevent rises, but only fasting effectively lowers insulin levels and resets the body's metabolic signals. Fasting is one of the oldest healing practices and remains the most effective and consistent way to lower insulin levels.

[Read the full newsletter](#) to understand this mechanism. Or visit [Dr Jason Fung's website](#).

NB: If you have diabetes or complex medical conditions, discuss any fasting plan with your doctor or nurse practitioner.

Ma te wa, Dr Richard J Coleman

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