Beating the bugs

Exercise is good for you! It’s a message we like to repeat in Inside Aotea, because regular exercise and eating healthily are two of the best ways to maintain good health.

Occasionally, though, there can be health risks to exercise; and in this edition – if you’re a swimmer – we have some information about stomach bugs that officials think are being spread via public pools.

It may be helpful for you and your children, if you are looking to do a few laps or your family wants to spend time at your local pool.

Another topic that we think is important to share with you is in relation to the screening tests used for checking your cardiovascular health. If you require testing for lipids, expert opinion tells us that many patients can now do away with the 12 hours of fasting before the tests.

That means no more long nights without food and more choice about when to come to our rooms. We’re very pleased to introduce this.

If you live in Porirua East, your children may have had a throat swab recently to test for the bacterial infection that can result in rheumatic fever.

The Ministry of Health has a nationwide project underway to reduce rates of the disease, and public health nurses have been going to schools in Porirua East and other parts of the country several times a week this winter and swabbing any child with a sore throat.

We are testing the swabs to look for Group A streptococcus, the bug that causes the disease. We are pleased to be part of this community project and part of a team helping to reduce the effects of the disease.

Three in four hospital admissions for acute rheumatic fever are children aged 5–14 years and most rheumatic fever occurs

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Stomach bug rate increases show good hygiene needed in households

A higher than usual rate of the stomach bug cryptosporidiosis in the region since February highlights the importance of good hygiene at home.

Cryptosporidiosis is very easily passed between people in a household, and attention to some basic hygiene measures will go a long way to helping your family stay bug free.

Washing your hands frequently and thoroughly, especially before preparing food and after going to the toilet, when anyone in your house has a diarrhoeal illness, is very important.

Health officials think public swimming pools – in particular, Porirua’s Arena Aquatic Centre and Kilbirnie’s Regional Aquatic Centre – may have helped spread the bug in the past months.

If you have diarrhoea, please don’t swim in public swimming pools for two weeks after being ill, and if you take a young child to a pool make sure they wear tight swimming togs.

Cryptosporidiosis symptoms – watery diarrhoea and stomach cramps – are unpleasant but not usually severe or long lasting. A person normally recovers fully in a few weeks.

However, people who have a weakened immune system, particularly people living with HIV, may develop a more severe and prolonged illness. We do recommend that if your immune system is weak, you should consider avoiding your local public pool following an outbreak of cryptosporidiosis until pool staff can tell you it is safe to swim again.

How might I get cryptosporidiosis?

- From swallowing contaminated food or water or sucking contaminated objects (such as toys).
- From swimming in pools contaminated by infected people.
- From drinking water from rivers, streams, shallow wells or roof rainwater contaminated by infected animals and humans.
- From not washing hands after touching animals (especially pets and farm animals).

What is the treatment?

There is no specific treatment, although your doctor may prescribe some medication to relieve the symptoms. People with cryptosporidiosis usually get better without treatment.
Responsibilities: Taking blood and collecting other specimens.

Most rewarding part of your job: Learning to deal with some challenging situations that really take you out of your comfort zone. I feel so much more confident dealing with different types of people than I did when I first started.

How do you most enjoy spending time outside work? Playing netball! I play winter season on Saturday, indoor on Tuesday and twilight on Thursday with the same team. We aren't amazing but we are getting better and better!

Health tip: If you want, or need, to lose weight, go to Weight Watchers! It really works. If you are worried you won't be able to motivate yourself to exercise, start playing a team sport like netball with a bunch of your friends. That way you are committed to something. (If you make an excuse one night not to play, it lets yourself down as well as your team.)

Plus, it’s a lot of fun.

Something your colleagues may not know about you: I’ve worked fulltime at Aotea Pathology since January 2007. Since I’m quiet and young(ish), people assume I’m new.