HEART-TO-HEART

YOUR GO-TO PLACE FOR CANDID CONVERSATIONS TOWARDS BETTER HEALTH



Trending: A Healthy Heart

HER HEART

DIGITAL MAGAZINE
ALL THINGS HEART HEALTH

SPRING 2024
ISSUE NO.09

WWW.HERHEART.ORG

ABOUT HER HEART



Welcome to our Spring Her Heart Magazine. In this edition, we discuss daylight savings, caring for our hearts, and recap an inspiring Women's Health Summit our the team recently attended.

We endeavour to keep you informed about all matters related to heart disease in women. You can expect a new edition of the Her Heart Digital Magazine to land in your inbox seasonally.

Our community is at the centre of all that we do and this magazine has been crafted with this in mind. We value your opinions and would love to hear your thoughts and receive feedback!

Please share these with us at hello@herheart.org

With Love,

Dr Linda Worrall-Carter

CEO & Founder

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OUR VISION

Her Heart is Australia's only not-for-profit (NFP) focused on the prevention of women's heart disease.

Her Heart speaks to women, about women, and for women.

As it has been found that the death of women due to heart disease is largely preventable, Her Heart aspires to educate and empower women to take control of their lives and make the necessary changes to decrease their risk.

At Her Heart, we are dedicated to empowering women with the knowledge improve their heart health.
Our mission is to:

Improve the heart health of Australian women with long-lasting impact

To be the 'go-to' place for women to access accurate information

To make women's heart health a top priority in the health, government, business and community sectors.

Her Heart



DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME:

Boosting Your Mood or Messing with Your Health?

With daylight saving time (DST) behind us this October, the shift marks the beginning of longer evenings and shorter days. Whether you enjoy the extended daylight hours or are still adjusting to the shift, the time change will already have start to have an impact

First introduced in Germany in 1916 during World War I to conserve energy, DST is now used in about 70 countries worldwide. The idea? Shift the clocks forward in spring and back in autumn to make the most of natural light. But while more daylight has its perks, it also comes with some surprising health impacts.

The Bright Side

One big advantage of DST is the longer evening daylight, giving you more time after work to get outdoors and stay active. That extra time in the sun is a big win for your mental health. Sunlight helps your body produce vitamin D and boosts serotonin, the brain chemical responsible for lifting your mood. So, whether it's a walk after dinner or a jog before dusk, those longer days can help you feel more energised and positive.

The Dark Side

But it’s not all sunshine and smiles. The one-hour time shift can wreak havoc on your internal body clock, leading to sleep loss and fatigue. Less light in the morning and more in the evening can push your natural sleep cycle back, leaving you groggy and out of sync. Over time, this sleep disruption can lead to what's known as “sleep debt.”

More concerning are the potential health risks. Studies show a 24% increase in heart attacks on the Monday after DST begins and an 8% higher risk of stroke in the days following the time change. Clearly, messing with our body clocks has more serious consequences than just feeling a bit tired.

How to Adjust and Thrive During Daylight Saving?

- **Start early:** If you didn’t start early, it’s not too late! Gradually adjust your bedtime by 15-20 minutes each night to align with the new time.
- **Get morning sunlight:** As soon as you wake up, head outside or at least sit near a window. Natural light helps reset your internal clock.
- **Cut back on caffeine:** Avoid coffee after lunch to ensure it doesn't interfere with your sleep.
- **Create a calming bedtime routine:** Make sure your bedroom is dark, cool, and quiet. Avoid screens before bed, and consider a relaxing routine like reading or meditation.

Love it or hate it, daylight saving time is here to stay. By preparing your body for the change, you can minimise the downsides and make the most of those longer, sunnier days!

I tried a breathwork class at an art gallery, and here's what I thought:

Written by Ailish Barry, Digital Communications Coordinator





After a busy day at work, I hopped on a train to the city to meet a friend for something a little different: a breathwork class at the Lume in Melbourne. I had imagined a peaceful hour of lying down, listening to soothing sounds, and meditating. But as it turns out, I was in for quite a surprise—perhaps I should have double-checked those class details before heading out!

As we entered the gallery, we were instantly transported to the snowy peaks of the Himalayas. The stage at the centre was set, with our instructors already meditating. The atmosphere buzzed with excitement as we rolled out our yoga mats, ready to disconnect from the outside world.

The session began with an unexpected twist: leaning back-to-back with our partners, we synchronised our breathing, setting the tone for what would be a more dynamic experience. We progressed through a series of seated breathing exercises, starting with energy breathing (quick inhales and exhales through the nose) paired with shoulder scrunching movements. Another technique had us raising our hands in the air for five minutes while chanting “Sat” on the inhale and “Nam” on the exhale, which we learned means “I am truth.” By the end of this, our arms were definitely shaking!

Finally, we transitioned into the lying-down meditation I had originally expected, enveloped by the sounds of a didgeridoo that filled the entire space. The calming mountain landscape around us made it a truly immersive experience.

Although the class was not what I had anticipated, I felt refreshed and was able to disconnect and relax, which was just what I needed.

If you're interested in attending, the Lume Gallery offers a variety of wellness classes. You can find more details here.

Try Breathwork at Home

Get comfortable: Find a quiet place where you can lie down comfortably on your back and close your eyes.
Relax your body: Before you begin, take a moment to consciously relax your muscles.
Inhale: Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose for a count of four. Focus on expanding your abdomen and ribcage as you inhale.
Hold: Gently hold your breath for a count of four.
Exhale: Exhale slowly and fully through your mouth for a count of four. As you release the breath, imagine all tension and stress leaving your body.
Repeat: Continue this cycle for 5-10 minutes. Stay focused on the rhythm of your breathing, using the counts to maintain a steady pace.



Note: Please consult your healthcare provider before trying any breathwork techniques, especially if you are pregnant, have chronic illnesses, or have any cardiac concerns. Breathwork may not be suitable for everyone and should be approached with care.



HEART-TO-HEART

Her Heart Conference 2024

Challenges, Solutions & Opportunities

Friday
25 October 2024

9:00 AM
5:00 PM

Sydney
NSW

The inaugural Her Heart Conference 2024 will bring together experts and thought leaders, creating a space for the exchange of knowledge, discussion of emerging trends, and promote awareness of cardiovascular disease in women. Book your tickets here: www.herheart.org/conference/

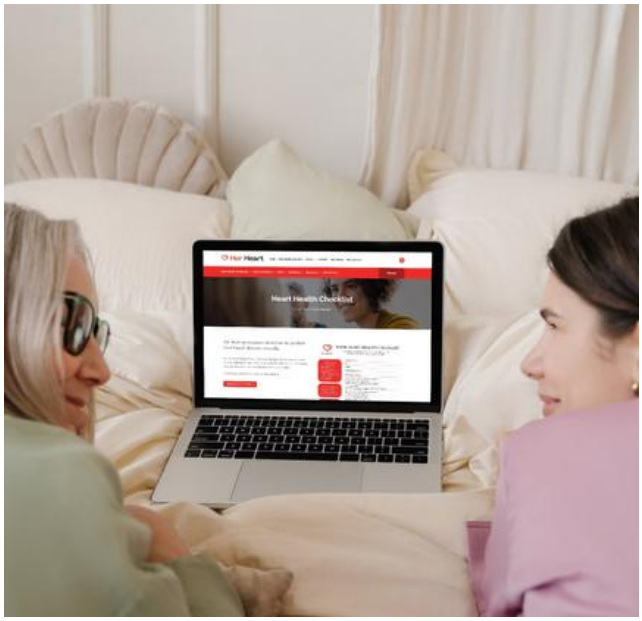


Show Your Heart Some Love for World Heart Day

World Heart Day, celebrated annually on the 29th of September, is a global initiative to raise awareness about heart health and the steps we can all take to care for this vital organ. With heart disease remaining a leading cause of death worldwide, it’s more important than ever to focus on keeping your heart healthy.

This October, we’re making it easier for you to show your heart some love with simple, actionable steps. Whether you’re looking to make small lifestyle changes or want to gain a better understanding of your heart health, we’ve got you covered.

Her Heart







1. Get a Heart Health Check

The most important step you can take for your heart is scheduling a health check. Knowing your numbers—like blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar levels—gives you a baseline for understanding your overall heart health. Early detection of any issues is key to preventing more serious conditions down the line. And to help you stay on track, take our **Heart Health Checklist** with you.

2. Download Our Wallet Card

Our **Her Heart Wallet Card** is a handy, pocket-sized resource designed to help you recognise the female-specific warning signs of a heart attack. It fits perfectly in your wallet, so you'll always have this important information close by. Share it with someone you care about and help spread awareness!

3. Adopt Heart-Healthy Habits

Taking care of your heart doesn't have to be overwhelming. Start small by focusing on one habit at a time. Whether it's increasing your physical activity, cutting out processed foods, getting more sleep, or quitting smoking, these changes make a big impact on heart health over time. Remember, every step counts.

4. Attend Our Her Heart Conference

Save the date for October 25th and head to the Pullman Sydney Hyde Park for the **Her Heart Conference.** Hear from leading experts on women's heart health and explore the latest in prevention, detection, and treatment. Whether you're a healthcare professional, a community member with heart disease, or simply passionate about heart health, don't miss this opportunity. Get your tickets now!

5. Learn About Your Family History

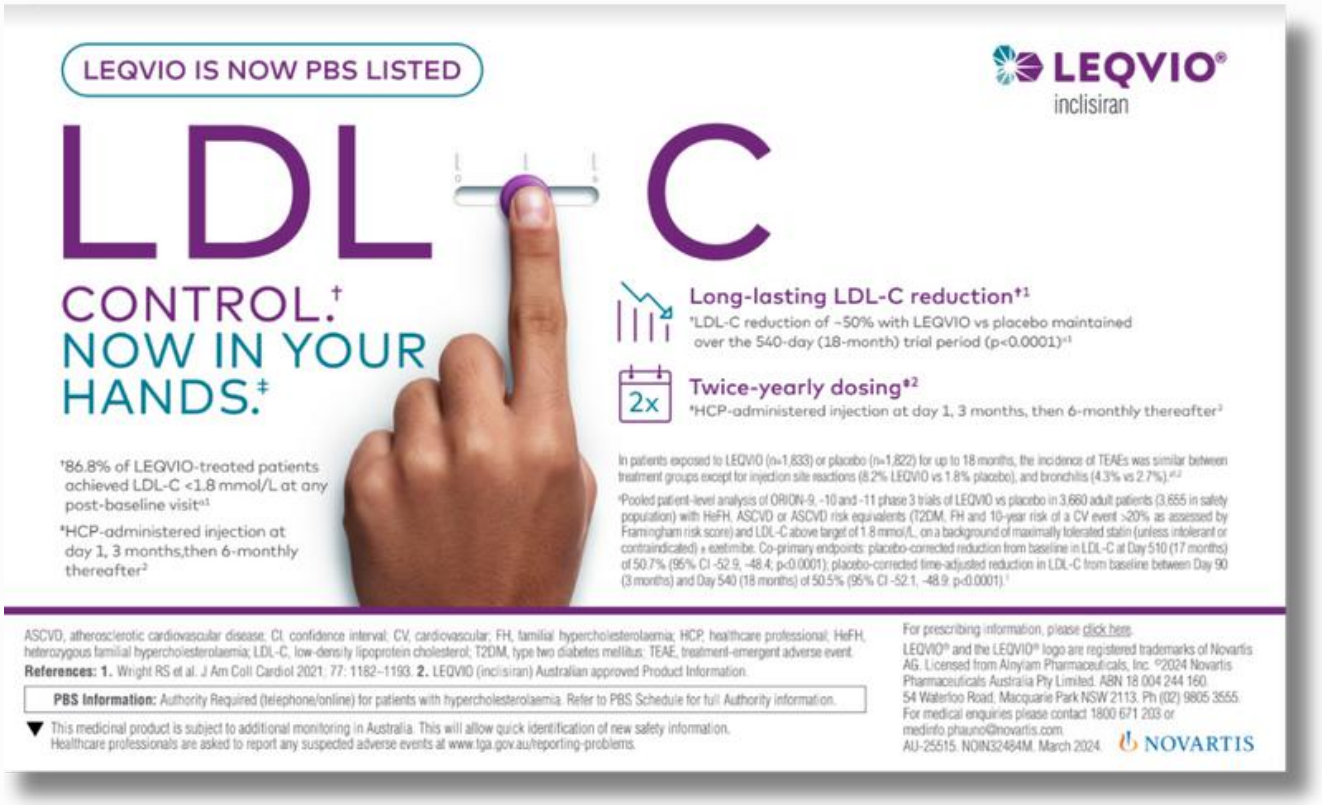
Start a conversation around your family's heart health history this month to be aware of your risk. Understanding your family's medical background is crucial for identifying your own risk factors. Share this information with your loved ones to ensure everyone is informed and proactive about their heart health.

This October, make heart health a priority. By taking these simple steps, you'll be well on your way to a heart-healthy life. **Want to learn more? Head to our website** for additional resources and support.

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THANK YOU TO OUR PLATINUM SPONSOR:

NOVARTIS



Novartis is positively impacting the lives of over 2.5 million patients across Australia and New Zealand through its innovative treatments. By collaborating with the healthcare system, Novartis addresses patient needs and is committed to advancing access to life-saving treatments and associated healthcare services.

The company is focused on reimagining medicine, leveraging cutting-edge science and technology to tackle complex healthcare challenges. Novartis's extensive research pipeline includes more than 50 ongoing Phase III programs, and efforts are being made to transform clinical trials, increasing patient access to their industry-leading trials in Australia.

Novartis is also dedicated to fostering an environment that prioritizes diversity, equity, and inclusion, while supporting family-friendly work practices. The company's culture is rooted in curiosity, integrity, and leadership, encouraging employees at all levels to contribute to its mission.

Talking with an expert

In this issue, we're spotlighting an interview with Dr. Karen Phillips, a leading Cardiac Electrophysiologist in Brisbane specialising in Atrial Fibrillation Ablation. Dr. Phillips shares key insights on how AF affects women and the critical importance of early detection.

What is Atrial Fibrillation (AF), and why should women be aware of it?

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is a common heart rhythm disorder affecting millions globally. Because the prevalence increases significantly with age it's an important issue for health screening and cardiac checks because of the generally long life expectancy for women in Australia. The condition leads to the heart's upper chambers (the atria) beating erratically which in turn causes inefficiency of the heart pump and a range of health issues. While it can affect both men and women, there are some important aspects that women, in particular, need to know about.

AF can cause symptoms like palpitations, shortness of breath, fatigue, dizziness, and chest discomfort. Some people do not get any warning symptoms that they have AF. It is also well known that women may experience different symptoms from men (and different from what is 'typically described' in medical textbooks) which can lead to delays in diagnosis for women. If left undiagnosed, AF can lead to a higher risk of stroke, heart failure, heart attacks, dementia and early death.

How does AF impact women differently than men?

Although atrial fibrillation affects both genders, research shows that women may have some unique considerations. On average women tend to experience more severe symptoms from AF, so if the condition is not diagnosed or treated correctly then women may experience poorer health outcomes and quality of life as a result. The likelihood of developing AF increases with age, and since women generally live longer, they may be more susceptible as they get older.

What are the key risks associated with AF?

One of the major concerns with AF is the increased risk of stroke because blood clots can form in the heart and then travel off to the brain unexpectedly. Around 1 in 10 people who have a stroke caused by AF were not aware they had AF prior to the stroke. Studies show that women with AF face a higher stroke risk compared to men.



Normal Heart Rhythm



Atrial Fibrillation Heart Rhythm



Not everybody has the same risk of having a stroke so once AF is diagnosed the risk would be assessed by your family doctor or Specialist and a stroke prevention strategy recommended. If the risk is high then anticoagulant medications (also called 'blood thinners') may be prescribed. These treatments reduce the risk of blood clots forming in the heart and travelling to the brain. Importantly anticoagulant medications not only reduce the risk of stroke but also of dementia.

What steps can women take to manage AF?

Managing AF often includes a combination of treatments, regular monitoring of the condition and lifestyle changes. Several lifestyle factors contribute to an increased risk of the onset or worsening of AF over time.

Talking with an expert

These include inadequate regular physical activity, obesity and excessive alcohol intake. Addressing these lifestyle issues along with good compliance with high blood pressure and obstructive sleep apnoea treatments are key factors in long term management.

As a cardiologist leading a very busy life, what daily habits do you prioritise to maintain your heart health?

I subscribe to the morning person' theory so the first hour of the day is mine to prioritise what happens – we often can't control what happens at the end of the day and plans can easily derailed! I take a brisk walk every morning and then turn my time to preparing a healthy, fresh lunch to take to work.

Although I might eat out occasionally and have a treat over the weekend I mostly follow a Mediterranean Diet. I eat nuts and beans or pulses several times per week and use olive oil for cooking or on salads during the week. I also am very careful with my salt intake.



But research on longevity and heart health also tells us that it's not just diet and exercise we have to pay attention to because there are important social and psychological pieces of the jigsaw puzzle. We all need to live life with a purpose, have supportive relationships and some type of activity that helps us to destress or feel happy. When you lead a busy life sometimes these end up getting reprioritised to the weekend!

What advice do you have for the women reading this magazine?

It is a sad fact but there is evidence around the world that women do not receive as good quality care for cardiac conditions as men. This can be due to biases from doctors or in the healthcare system but, in my experience, this sometimes also results from women not prioritising their own health.

Women are traditionally the caregivers and nurturers and frequently make sure everyone else in the family is cared for before they look after themselves. This can result in women not seeking or accessing the best treatments for their AF.

I also find that women may prefer a different communication and decision-making style to men which can impact outcomes. This includes providing more information for reflection and encouraging research and discussion with family or friends before arriving at a plan.



Women reading this magazine will be interested in taking charge of their own heart health. I would encourage them to be proactive about getting a heart health check and if you are diagnosed with a heart condition then research, understand and discuss the options for treatment so that you feel that you are in control of the plan that works best for you.

If you'd like to read the full Key Opinion Leader blog by Dr. Karen Phillips, you can find it on our website here.

If you'd like the opportunity to hear from Dr. Phillips directly, she'll be sharing her expertise on Atrial Fibrillation in women at our Inaugural Her Heart Conference in Sydney on 25 October 2024.

Her Heart

Real stories:



I got back to my hotel and my heart was beating out of control."

After a night of casual drinks with friends four years ago, Sally Brooks realised something was not quite right with her heart. It wasn't until six months later that she was diagnosed with the most common heart rhythm disorder in women, Atrial Fibrillation – or AFib.

Sally's GP listened to her heart and said, although it sounded fine, he wanted her to have a 24 hour holter monitor just to be sure. A Holter monitor is a battery-operated portable device that measures and records your heart's activity (ECG) continuously for 24 hours, allowing more time to pick up abnormalities.

"I didn't end up getting the holter monitor put on until six months after my visit to the GP because I was busy with work and I hadn't been having any symptoms."

So it came as a huge shock when only days after having the test, Sally received a call from her GP. "He told me to get to his surgery straight away."

Sally's doctor explained that the test had shown she has Atrial Fibrillation, and needed to go on blood thinners immediately because she was at risk of having a stroke.

"I was shocked to suddenly have a diagnosis like that, especially when it's not curable and I need to take medication daily," said Sally. "But I'd rather be taking a couple of tablets a day than be in hospital."

"I had just turned 58, so in the back of my mind I thought it might be related to menopause, but when I got home I knew I needed to see the doctor."

Now 62, Sally has made lifestyle changes to help manage her symptoms.

"In terms of alcohol, I have two or three glasses a week because alcohol seems to trigger my irregular heart beats. I also monitor my caffeine intake and only have one coffee a day."

Reducing her stress levels has also helped, says Sally. "I retired from work a year ago and I've noticed the lack of stress has really helped. And all the general stuff of course! Like eating well and exercising."

Sally also acknowledges that her strong family history of stroke puts her at risk, with her grandmother having three strokes and dying at just 68.

Discover more about Atrial Fibrillation here, and if you'd like to share your experience, click here.

WANT TO SHARE YOUR STORY?

Empathy & Endurance:

Lessons from Marathon Runner Lisa Weightman







At the recent Women's Agenda Summit, we had the privilege of hearing from Lisa Weightman, a remarkable Olympic marathon runner known for her resilience and determination. With a career spanning over a decade and representation at four Olympic Games, Lisa is not only an elite athlete but also working full-time and raising a child. Her journey has been filled with challenges, yet she continues to inspire others with her insights on coping during tough times.

Embracing the Journey

Lisa shared her experiences of overcoming setbacks, including her recent non-selection for the upcoming Olympics. Rather than viewing this as a defeat, she emphasised the importance of empathy and finding new opportunities. Lisa remarked, "When you get knocked down, you need to get right back up and pivot."

The Power of Connection

One key takeaway from Lisa's presentation was the importance of talking about our experiences. She believes that sharing our struggles is not a weakness but a superpower. "The more we share our experience as a cohort, the greater chance we have of helping the next generation," Lisa explained. By encouraging open discussions, we can build a more supportive community that empowers us all.

Finding Your Sparkle

In her presentation, Lisa encouraged everyone to "find your sparkle" and trust their instincts. As she put it, having a positive outlook combined with empathy can guide us through difficult times. This advice resonates deeply, reminding us that while challenges are a part of life, our responses to them can shape our future.

Lisa's journey serves as a powerful reminder that age should not define our dreams. "Being 40 doesn't mean your dreams are over; perhaps it means they are only just beginning," she asserted. By sharing her story, Lisa inspires women to pursue their passions, regardless of life's hurdles.

In the news:

Want to Live to 100?

The number of people living to 100 is rising fast, growing from 151,000 in 2000 to 573,000 in 2021. What's their secret? Scientists have studied centenarians around the world and uncovered key lifestyle habits that contribute to longevity.

Centenarians often follow a balanced, plant-based diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and lean proteins, while limiting salt. Quality sleep also plays a crucial role in their overall health. Additionally, many live in rural areas, benefiting from the stress-reducing effects of nature.

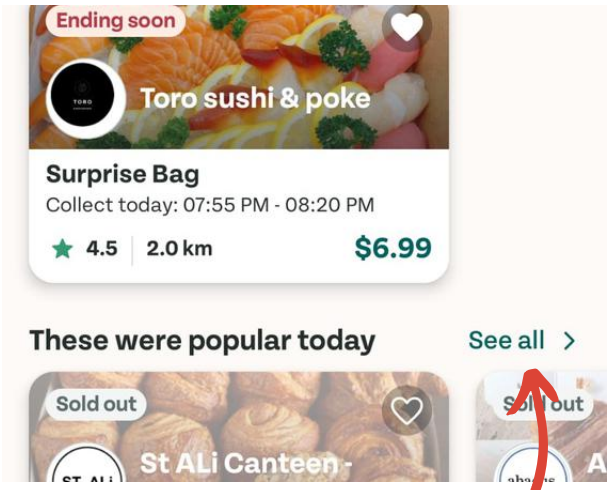
Want to live longer? Why not try incorporating some of these habits into your daily routine. Small changes today could lead to a healthier, longer tomorrow!



Spider Vemon Research

Ground breaking research from the University of Queensland has found that venom from Australia's deadly funnel-web spider could help treat heart attack and transplant patients. The Hi1a peptide, inspired by the venom, has the potential to protect the heart during an attack and improve donor heart viability. With $17.6 million in government funding, clinical trials are set to begin, offering hope to save thousands of lives annually.

P.S. If you're not a fan of spiders, you might want to skip this link - learn more here!



Too Good To Go

For our Melbourne readers, we're excited to recommend an app that just launched (not sponsored!), but it's a fantastic way to reduce food waste while saving money. Simply download the app "Too Good To Go" to order surprise bags filled with delicious unsold food at half the original price or less. It's a win-win that benefits both your wallet and the environment! Sydney readers, stay tuned, it's likely coming your way soon!

5 MINUTES WITH DR LINDA

01. What I have been doing

It's been a busy time with our up and coming Conference on October 25th. Our team have been working incredibly hard to bring you a really exciting event, with a stellar line up! I would love for all of you to attend, as there's still time to get tickets. You can book your tickets here.

02. Attending a Women's Agenda Summit

Last month, our team were invited to attend the inaugural Women's Agenda Health & Wellbeing Summit in Sydney. It was an incredible experience, and was opened by the Hon Ged Kearney (Assistant Minister for Health & Indigenous Minister). It was inspiring, Equally inspiring was Grace Tame and I couldn't resist asking her for a photo! The entire program was outstanding. Warmest congratulations to Women's Agenda founders Tarla Lambert-Patel and Angela Priestley, and their team for a fantastic event!



03. What I am going to watch

I found The M Factor: Shredding the Silence on Menopause on Instagram and saved it to watch. It would be great if in Australia - we could earn CPD/ credit points for viewing the film (like our US colleagues!). The film highlights the often overlooked challenges women face during menopause. I can't wait to see how it sparks conversations and hopefully drives change in this area of women's health. The documentary premieres on 17th October.

04. What I am reading

Recently, I was reminded of one of my favourite books, The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini. It's beautifully written but I must warn you, it's a tear jerker! The story is a gripping tale of betrayal and redemption, centred around two young boys living in Kabul, Afghanistan. They are determined to try harder than ever to win the local kite-fighting tournament, a popular Afghan pastime that serves as a backdrop for the complex relationships in the story.

05. What I have been baking?

Last month, I tried a fantastic recipe from @lindsay.keosayian: Healthy Breakfast Cookies. They're easy to make, delicious, and packed with nutritious ingredients—perfect for a quick, guilt-free snack or breakfast! I shared them with the Her Heart team in Sydney, and everyone loved them! Check out the recipe on the next page (& the photo taken by one of my team!), and be sure to follow Lindsay for more healthy ideas.



HER HEART KITCHEN: Healthy Breakfast Cookies

These are perfect when you're on the go or craving a healthy snack in the afternoons (not just for breakfast). The original recipe is by @lindsay.keosayian, and they're so simple to make, delicious, and packed with wholesome ingredients.

You'll need:

- 1 ripe banana, mashed
- 60ml nut or seed butter
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tbsp chia seeds
- 2 tbsp pure maple syrup (optional, or substitute with honey)
- 35g pumpkin seeds
- 55g organic raisins
- 100g rolled oats
- flaky salt (optional for topping)

Method:

1. In a bowl, combine the banana, nut or seed butter, cinnamon, chia seeds, and maple syrup.
2. Add pumpkin seeds, raisins, and oats, and stir until well combined.
3. Place the bowl in the fridge for about 10 minutes.
4. Scoop the mixture onto a lined baking sheet (this batch makes 6 cookies).
5. Bake at 190°C for about 12 minutes.
6. Top with flaky salt (optional) and enjoy!



These cookies are heart-healthy thanks to their use of whole grains, healthy fats from nut or seed butter, and the addition of chia seeds and pumpkin seeds, which are rich in omega-3 fatty acids and fibre.

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