

Please enable JavaScript in order to get the best experience when using this site.

- [Site Navigation](#)
- [Page Content](#)

[Menu](#)

State Government Victoria [Better Health Channel Logo](#)

Caret



[Health.vic](#)

[Victoria's hub for health services and business](#)



[DHHS](#)

[A gateway to the strategies, policies, programs and services delivered by the Department of Health & Human Services.](#)



[Seniors Online](#)

[Victorian government portal for older people, with information about government and community services and programs.](#)

[Show search toolbar](#)

[Contrast](#) [Sign Up](#) [Login](#)

Search

Type a minimum of three characters then press UP or DOWN on the keyboard to navigate the autocompleted search results

Navigation

[Home](#) [Close Menu](#)

- [Conditions and treatments](#)
[Conditions and treatments](#)
 - [Allergies](#)
[Allergies](#)
 - [Allergic reaction to packaged food](#)
 - [Anxiety](#)
 - [Arthritis](#)
 - [Asthma](#)
 - [Behavioural conditions](#)
 - [Birth defects](#)
 - [Blood and blood vessels](#)
 - [Bones muscles and joints](#)
[Bones muscles and joints](#)
 - [Foot care - podiatrists](#)
 - [Brain and nerves](#)
 - [Cancer](#)
 - [Complementary and alternative care](#)
 - [Dementia](#)
- [Healthy living](#)
[Healthy living](#)
 - [Alcohol](#)
 - [Babies and toddlers \(0-3\)](#)
 - [Children \(4-12\)](#)
 - [Drugs and addictive behaviours](#)
 - [Environmental health](#)
 - [Family Violence](#)
 - [Older people in hospital – Get well soon](#)
 - [Health checks](#)
 - [Healthy Eating](#)

Summary

- An adhesion is a band of scar tissue that joins two surfaces of the body that are usually separate.
- The formation of scar tissue is the body's repair mechanism in response to tissue disturbance caused by surgery, infection, injury (trauma) or radiation.
- Surgery to remove the adhesions (adhesiolysis) will cause more adhesions to form in around 70 per cent of cases.

An adhesion is a band of scar tissue that joins two internal body surfaces that are not usually connected. Organs or tissues within the body stick (adhere) to other internal surfaces.

Adhesions develop as the body attempts to repair itself. This normal response can occur after surgery, infection, injury (trauma) or radiation. Adhesions may appear as thin sheets of tissue similar to plastic wrap, or as thick fibrous bands.

Adhesions can affect the female reproductive organs (ovaries, fallopian tubes), the bowel, the area around the heart, the spine and the hand. They can cause a range of problems including infertility, dyspareunia (painful intercourse), pelvic pain and bowel obstruction or blockage. Adhesions can also lead to a complex set of problems called adhesion-related disorder (ARD).

Adhesions are a widespread problem. Up to 93 per cent of people who have abdominal surgery go on to develop adhesions. Abdominal adhesions also occur in 10 per cent of people who have never had surgery.

Risks of adhesions

Adhesions may:

- develop after any kind of pelvic or abdominal surgery – people who have major or multiple procedures are even more at risk
- cause significantly higher post-operative complications (leaks, wound infections, haemorrhages) in people with adhesion-related perforations. This may also lead to a longer stay in hospital
- lead to other risks and complications, including small bowel obstructions, infertility and chronic pelvic pain
- cause increased risk, complexity and complications during subsequent surgery.

The incidence of adhesions has increased with the rise in gynaecological procedures. Up to 90 per cent of women suffer post-operative adhesions following major gynaecological surgery.

Development of adhesions

Adhesions develop as the body attempts to repair itself. This is the body's normal response after:

- surgery, particularly abdominal surgery
- infection
- endometriosis
- injury (trauma)
- radiation treatment.

Adhesions can also form after inflammation in the abdomen or pelvis.

Symptoms of adhesions

Although most adhesions are painless and do not cause complications, adhesions cause 60 to 70 per cent of small bowel obstructions in adults and are believed to contribute to the development of chronic pelvic pain.

Adhesion-related disorder (ARD) is a group of symptoms that may occur as a result of adhesions. A person with ARD will usually experience chronic abdominal pain.

Typical adhesions form within the first few days after surgery, but symptoms can last for months or even years. Symptoms may be mostly in one area of the abdomen, but are often generalised, vague, 'crampy' and difficult to define. This means ARD can be difficult to diagnose.

Symptoms of ARD may include:

- chronic pain
- infertility
- bowel obstruction and an inability to pass gas
- urinary bladder dysfunction
- pain and difficulty having a bowel movement
- pain on movement such as walking, sitting or lying in certain positions
- emotional disorders such as depression, thoughts of suicide or hopelessness.

Other intestinal problems may include constipation, obstruction, or alternating constipation with diarrhoea from partial obstruction.

Women may experience gynaecological problems, which can add to the anxiety and self-esteem problems that may already be experienced by women who suffer with this disorder.

Symptoms of ARD can be mistaken as a sign of another condition. These can include a whole host of other possible diagnoses such as chronic fatigue syndrome, endometriosis, irritable bowel syndrome, fibromyalgia, depression and anxiety.

Diagnosis of adhesions

It is very difficult to diagnose the chronic pain of adhesions correctly. Diagnostic tests such as blood tests, x-ray procedures, CT scans, MRIs and ultrasound will not diagnose adhesions. Hysterosalpingography (an x-ray that views the inside of the uterus and fallopian tubes) may help diagnose adhesions inside the uterus or fallopian tubes.

According to your symptoms, your doctor will order the appropriate diagnostic tests to rule out other medical conditions that may have similar symptoms.

If the results of these tests are normal or negative for abnormal pathology, a diagnostic laparoscopy may be appropriate. This is the only test that can confirm the presence of adhesions. If adhesions are found, your doctor can usually release them during the same surgery.

Treatment of adhesions

Adhesions can be treated either with open or laparoscopic (keyhole) surgery, known as adhesiolysis. The adhesions are cut by scalpel or electrical current.

Open adhesiolysis

As adhesions are likely to form after certain surgical procedures, open adhesiolysis may not be worthwhile, except to remedy serious problems such as bowel obstruction.

In around 70 per cent of cases, the operation to remove the original adhesions will cause more adhesions to develop. Discuss the risks, benefits and alternatives to surgery thoroughly with your doctor before you make a decision.

Laparoscopic adhesiolysis

People with symptoms of adhesions may consider laparoscopic surgery. The advantage of this procedure is that only a small incision (cut) is required, which is why it is also known as 'keyhole surgery'. Laparoscopy is the preferred method for performing infertility surgery as there is a decreased risk of new adhesions forming.

Laparoscopic adhesiolysis can significantly improve quality of life among women with chronic pelvic pain due to adhesions. This procedure shows similar results to more invasive forms of surgery when it comes to managing extensive adhesions. However, it can be time-consuming (the procedure may take two to four hours), technically difficult and involves some risk.

Most women who choose to have laparoscopic adhesiolysis:

- are discharged on the same day of the procedure
- don't need to have major abdominal cuts (incisions)
- experience minimal complications
- return to full activity within one week of the procedure.

Non-surgical treatments for adhesions

Alternatives to surgery include:

- medication – this is often the first treatment choice for acute pain and forms part of the treatment for chronic pain
- exercise
- physical therapy
- lifestyle changes.

Although they can be helpful, medications are not a cure-all. They can cause side effects or may be ineffective, and are often costly. A pain specialist can advise you on the non-surgical treatment options most suited to your situation.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- NURSE-ON-CALL. Tel. 1300 60 60 24 – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)

References

- *Adhesions – general and after surgery*, 2014, eMedicineHealth. [More information here](#).
- *Abdominal adhesions*, 2013, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. [More information here](#).

Send us your feedback

- Rate this website
- Your comments
- Questions
- Your details

1/4 How would you rate this website?

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Fair
- Poor

[Next](#) [Submit Now](#) [Cancel](#)

Send us your feedback

- Rate this website
- Your comments
- Questions
- Your details

Please note that we cannot answer personal medical queries.

If you are looking for health or medical advice we recommend that you:

- talk to your doctor or pharmacist

- dial triple zero (000) in an emergency
- ring NURSE-ON-CALL Tel. 1300 60 60 24.

2/4 Your Comments

Tell us who you are

Enter your comments below (optional)

[Next](#) [Submit Now](#) [Cancel](#)

Send us your feedback

- Rate this website
- Your comments
- Questions
- Your details

3/4 Questions

What are you here to do?

Did you find what you were looking for?

- Yes
- No

[Next](#) [Submit Now](#) [Cancel](#)

Send us your feedback

- Rate this website
- Your comments
- Questions
- Your details

4/4 Your details

Postcode

Email Address

[Submit Now](#) [Cancel](#)

Send us your feedback

Thank you. Your feedback has been successfully sent.

More information

Digestive system

The following content is displayed as Tabs. Once you have activated a link navigate to the end of the list to view its associated content. The activated link is defined as Active Tab

- [Digestive system explained](#)
- [Oesophagus](#)
- [Stomach](#)
- [Small intestine](#)
- [Large intestine](#)
- [Rectum](#)
- [Liver and gallbladder](#)
- [Pancreas](#)

Digestive system explained

- [Barium tests](#)

[Barium tests are used to examine conditions of the digestive tract such as reflux, narrowing or ulceration...](#)

- [Digestive system explained](#)

[The digestive tract can be thought of as a long muscular tube with digestive organs attached along the way...](#)

- [Fibre in food](#)

[A diet high in fibre keeps the digestive system healthy...](#)

Oesophagus

- [Barrett's oesophagus](#)

[Symptoms of Barrett's oesophagus are similar to regular heartburn, which means many people don't seek treatment until their condition is quite advanced...](#)

- [Digestive tract birth defects](#)

[Too much amniotic fluid surrounding the baby during pregnancy \(polyhydramnios\) may indicate the presence of defects of the digestive tract...](#)

- [Hiccups](#)

[Hiccups that last for days, weeks or even years may be symptomatic of underlying disease...](#)

- [Indigestion](#)

[Food inside the stomach is only kept there by the force of gravity so to avoid heartburn, don't lie down after a big meal...](#)

- [Throat cancer](#)

[Risk factors for throat cancer include smoking and heavy alcohol consumption...](#)

Stomach

- [Abdominal pain in children](#)

[Children may feel stomach pain for a range of reasons and may need treatment...](#)

- [Gastritis](#)

[Gastritis may be caused by many factors including infection, alcohol, particular medications and some allergic and immune conditions...](#)

- [Hernias](#)

[Both reducible and non-reducible hernias need to be surgically repaired - this is a common operation...](#)

- [Peritonitis](#)

[Peritonitis is a life-threatening emergency that needs prompt medical treatment...](#)

- [Stomach cancer](#)

[The symptoms of stomach cancer are usually vague and can be common to other medical conditions...](#)

- [Stomach ulcer](#)

[Most stomach ulcers are caused by infection or medication, not stress or poor diet...](#)

Small intestine

- [Coeliac disease and gluten sensitivity](#)

[Coeliac disease is an immune disease caused by gluten...](#)

- [Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis](#)

[When people with inflammatory bowel disease are not experiencing a flare-up of their illness, they feel quite well and are often free of symptoms...](#)

- [Gastroenteritis](#)

[It is important to establish the cause of gastro, as different types of gastroenteritis respond to different treatments...](#)

- [Gastroenteritis - amoebiasis](#)

[Amoebiasis can cause diarrhoea among travellers to developing countries...](#)

- [Gastroenteritis - campylobacteriosis](#)

[Campylobacteriosis is a type of gastroenteritis and is more common in children under five years of age and young adults...](#)

- [Gastroenteritis - cryptosporidiosis](#)

[Outbreaks of cryptosporidiosis have been associated with child care centres, public swimming pools and contaminated water supplies...](#)

- [Gastroenteritis - giardiasis](#)

[Most people infected with Giardia parasites do not develop symptoms but can still spread the infection to others...](#)

- [Gastroenteritis in children](#)

[Gastroenteritis or Gastro can be dangerous for very young babies. Gastro is common in young children and spreads easily. Gastro is a bowel infection which causes diarrhoea \(runny or watery poo\) and...](#)

- [Gastroenteritis - salmonellosis](#)

[You may be more prone to salmonellosis if you are elderly, have another medical condition \(such as a weakened immune system\) or are malnourished...](#)

- [Gastroenteritis - shigella](#)

[Outbreaks of shigella gastroenteritis can occur in institutional settings, particularly where children are still in nappies or adults are incontinent...](#)

- [Irritable bowel syndrome \(IBS\)](#)

[Irritable bowel syndrome can't be cured with medications or special diets but avoiding individual triggers can help prevent it...](#)

- [Pets – safe handling of reptiles and tropical fish](#)

[People in contact with tropical fish and reptiles such as turtles, lizards and snakes may be at risk of infections and illness due to germs \(such as bacteria, viruses and parasites\) carried on the...](#)

- [Rotavirus](#)

[Rotavirus is a common cause of viral gastroenteritis for Australian babies and preschool children...](#)

- [Traveller's diarrhoea](#)

[The risk of traveller's diarrhoea is higher where sanitation and hygiene standards are poor...](#)

Large intestine

- [Appendicitis](#)

[Anyone of any age can be struck by appendicitis, but it seems to be more common during childhood and adolescence...](#)

- [Botulism](#)

[Botulism is considered a medical emergency. If untreated, it may cause death...](#)

- [Bowel cancer](#)

[Bowel cancer is highly curable if found at an early stage...](#)

- [Bowel motions](#)

[Many illnesses and events can affect the colour and texture of faeces...](#)

- [Collagenous colitis and lymphocytic colitis](#)

[Collagenous colitis and lymphocytic colitis are types of inflammatory bowel disease \(IBD\)...](#)

- [Constipation](#)

[Most cases of constipation are treated by eating a diet high in fibre, drinking more fluids, and exercising daily...](#)

- [Constipation and children](#)

[A healthy diet, plenty of fluids, exercise and regular toilet habits can help relieve constipation in children...](#)

- [Diarrhoea](#)

[Acute diarrhoea in babies and young children can be life threatening...](#)

- [Diverticulosis and diverticulitis](#)

[Diverticulosis and diverticulitis relate to the formation or infection of abnormal pouches in the bowel wall...](#)

- [Flatulence](#)

[Foods that tend to trigger flatulence also contain essential nutrients and shouldn't be eliminated...](#)

- [Incontinence and continence problems](#)

[Many things can be done to manage, treat and sometimes cure incontinence and continence problems...](#)

- [Incontinence - prevention tips](#)

[Incontinence can be prevented in most cases...](#)

- [Irritable bowel syndrome \(IBS\)](#)

[Irritable bowel syndrome can't be cured with medications or special diets but avoiding individual triggers can help prevent it...](#)

- [Pinworms](#)

[Despite the unsavoury reputation, a pinworm infection \(worms\) is relatively harmless and easily treated...](#)

- [Polyps](#)

[Nasal polyps can sometimes interfere with breathing...](#)

- [Short bowel syndrome](#)

[A person with short bowel syndrome is likely to be deficient in a range of important nutrients...](#)

- [Slow transit constipation](#)

[A newborn with slow transit constipation may not pass meconium until 24 hours or more after being born...](#)

- [Stoma after ileostomy or colostomy](#)

[A stoma is an artificially created hole \(stoma\) in the abdomen so that faeces can still leave the body...](#)

- [Tapeworms and hydatid disease](#)

[It's important for your own health to control tapeworm infection in your dog...](#)

Rectum

- [Anal fissure](#)

[Around half of cases of anal fissures heal by themselves with proper self-care and avoidance of constipation...](#)

- [Haemorrhoids](#)

[A diet high in fibre can both treat and prevent haemorrhoids...](#)

- [Rectal cancer](#)

[If treated in its earliest stages, rectal cancer is highly curable...](#)

- [Rectal prolapse](#)

[Rectal prolapse occurs when the rectum turns itself inside out and comes out through the anus...](#)

- [Rectocele](#)

[A rectocele is when the rectum protrudes into the vagina...](#)

Liver and gallbladder

- [Cirrhosis of the liver](#)

[Cirrhosis is a type of liver damage where healthy cells are replaced by scar tissue...](#)

- [Gallbladder - gallstones and surgery](#)

[Medical treatment for gallstones may not be necessary unless the gallstones cause symptoms...](#)

- [Gilbert's syndrome](#)

[Gilbert's syndrome and hepatitis both cause jaundice but are not related...](#)

- [Hepatitis](#)

[Hepatitis is an umbrella term for several diseases that affect the liver...](#)

- [Hepatitis A](#)

[Immunisation is the best protection against hepatitis A infection and it is recommended for people in high-risk groups...](#)

- [Hepatitis B](#)

[Hepatitis B is a viral infection that affects the liver and can lead to serious illness or death...](#)

- [Hepatitis B – immunisation](#)

[Immunisation against hepatitis B reduces the risk of infection in babies...](#)

- [Hepatitis C](#)

[In Australia, hepatitis C is most often spread through the sharing of unsterile drug injecting equipment. New all oral combination treatment has greatly improved health outcomes for people with...](#)

- [Hepatitis C Cure - what it means for Victorians \(video\)](#)

[Hepatitis C Cure - what it means for Victorians...](#)

- [Jaundice in babies](#)

[If your baby is full-term and healthy, mild jaundice is nothing to worry about and will resolve by itself within a week or so...](#)

- [Liver](#)

[Some forms of liver disease are inherited, while others are caused by lifestyle factors...](#)

- [Liver cancer](#)

[Liver cancer can be a primary cancer that starts in the liver, or a secondary cancer that starts in another part of the body and spreads to the liver...](#)

- [Liver - fatty liver disease](#)

[The damage caused by fatty liver disease can often be halted or reversed through simple lifestyle changes...](#)

- [New drugs for the treatment of hepatitis C – Frequently Asked Questions for patients](#)

[In Australia, hepatitis C is most often spread through the sharing of unsterile drug injecting equipment. New all oral combination treatment has greatly improved health outcomes for people with...](#)

- [Primary biliary cirrhosis](#)

[Primary biliary cirrhosis is an autoimmune condition characterised by inflammation and scarring of the bile ducts within the liver...](#)

Pancreas

- [Diabetes](#)

[Diabetes and the build-up of glucose \(sugar\) in the blood can cause serious complications if left untreated...](#)

- [Diabetes type 1](#)

[Type 1 diabetes can affect anyone of any age, but is more common in people under 30 years...](#)

- [Diabetes type 2](#)

[Type 2 diabetes may be prevented, but it cannot be cured...](#)

- [Pancreas](#)

[The pancreas helps to digest food, particularly protein...](#)

- [Pancreatic cancer](#)

[The causes of pancreatic cancer are unknown, but smokers are at greater risk...](#)

- [Pancreatitis](#)

[Pancreatitis is inflammation of the pancreas, which can be either acute or chronic...](#)

Related Information

- [Peritonitis](#)

Peritonitis is a life-threatening emergency that needs prompt medical treatment...

- [Hernias](#)

Both reducible and non-reducible hernias need to be surgically repaired - this is a common operation...

- [Abdominal birth defects](#)

During fetal development, the diaphragm or abdominal wall may fail to properly fuse, allowing the abdominal organs to protrude...

- [Abdominal pain in adults](#)

The type of pain felt in the abdomen can vary greatly...

- [Incontinence - tips for carers](#)

A person's incontinence can be a challenging problem for their carer, but help is available from a range of sources, so don't think you must cope alone...

[Home](#)

Related information on other websites

- [International Adhesions Society](#)
- [Joanna Briggs Institute](#)

Content Partner

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by: Joanna Briggs Institute



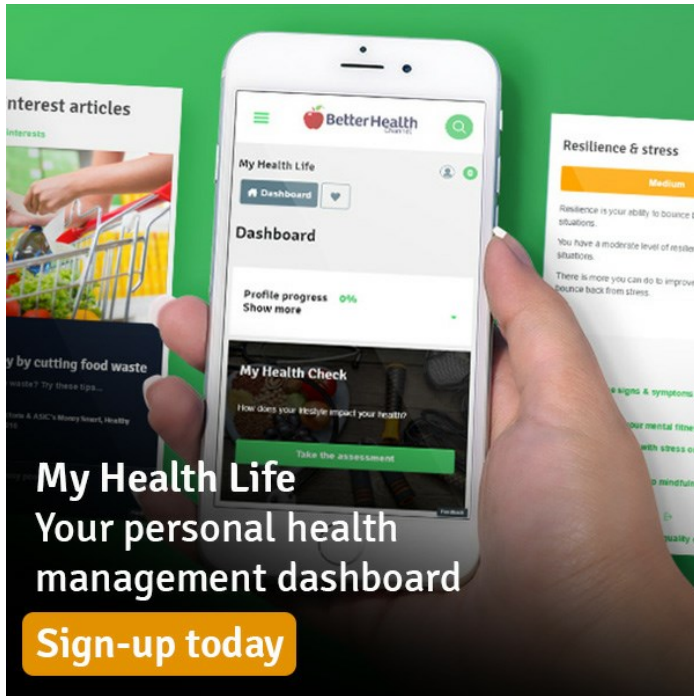
THE JOANNA BRIGGS INSTITUTE

Last updated: April 2017

Content on this website is provided for information purposes only. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not in any way endorse or support such therapy, service, product or treatment and is not intended to replace advice from your doctor or other registered health professional. The information and materials contained on this website are not intended to constitute a comprehensive guide concerning all aspects of the therapy, product or treatment described on the website. All users are urged to always seek advice

betterhealth.vic.gov.au

from a registered health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions and to ascertain whether the particular therapy, service, product or treatment described on the website is suitable in their circumstances. The State of Victoria and the Department of Health & Human Services shall not bear any liability for reliance by any user on the materials contained on this website.



My Health Life helps you manage your health

With tools, information and recommendations tailored to you, it's your personal and secure health dashboard.

[Learn more](#)

Medical Dictionary

Enter a search term

[Search](#)

Search for your topic using the Merriam Webster medical dictionary



Service Search

Service Search

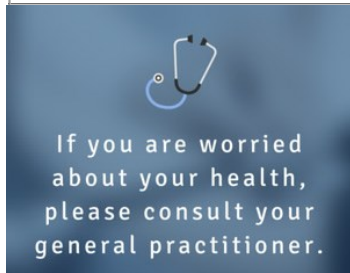
Find services near you

Service:

Location:

Type a minimum of three characters then press UP or DOWN on the keyboard to navigate the autocompleted search results

[Use my location](#)



Find a doctor

Need to find a doctor in your local area? Take a look at the general practitioners entry in our health service profiles.

[see general practitioner](#)

Recent Activity

49 people have watched a video today

- **Health topics**

- [Conditions and treatments](#)
- [Healthy living](#)
- [Services and support](#)
-

- **Explore**

- [Recipes](#)
- [Healthy pantry](#)
- [Videos](#)
- [Consumer medicine information](#)
- [Multilingual health information - Health Translations Directory](#)

- **About**

- [About us](#)
- [Accessibility](#)
- [Content partners](#)
- [Privacy](#)
- [Terms of use](#)
- [Contact us](#)

- **Connect with us**

- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [YouTube](#)

Page last reviewed: 27 Feb 2014

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au:443/health/conditionsandtreatments/adhesions>

- <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au:443/about/privacy>

[Privacy Statement](#)

- <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au:443/about/terms-of-use>

[Copyright Notice](#)

- <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au:443/about/terms-of-use>

[Disclaimer Notice](#)

This web site is managed and authorised by the Department of Health & Human Services, State Government of Victoria, Australia

© Copyright State of Victoria 2018.

[Back to Top](#)

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

Joanna Briggs Institute

Content on this website is provided for information purposes only. Information about a therapy, service, product or treatment does not in any way endorse or support such therapy, service, product or treatment and is not intended to replace advice from your doctor or other registered health professional. The information and materials contained on this website are not intended to constitute a comprehensive guide concerning all aspects of the therapy, product or treatment described on the website. All users are urged to always seek advice from a registered health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions and to ascertain whether the particular therapy, service, product or treatment described on the website is suitable in their circumstances. The State of Victoria and the Department of Health & Human Services shall not bear any liability for reliance by any user on the materials contained on this website.

For the latest updates and more information, visit www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Copyright © 1999/2019 State of Victoria. Reproduced from the Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au) at no cost with permission of the Victorian Minister for Health. Unauthorised reproduction and other uses comprised in the copyright are prohibited without permission.