Signature Wellness
DR. ARNOLD'S OFFICE

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WEEKLY NEWSLETTER

THE SIGNATURE WELLNESS WEEKLY

Science. Experience. *Compassion.*

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This week's newsletter brings together two conversations I have been having increasingly often with patients: why weight can become so difficult to manage despite healthy habits, and why ordering more laboratory tests doesn't necessarily lead to better healthcare. We're also highlighting Chris Yap Young's Fitness & Nutrition Program, sharing news about my upcoming breast cancer book, and inviting you to my October 23 talk.

FROM THE PRACTICE

WEIGHT AND METABOLISM

Your Biology Has Changed: Why the Same Inputs May No Longer Produce the *Same Outputs*

> *"My weight seems to be working against me. I don't understand it. My diet hasn't changed. In fact, I've improved it. I exercise. I lift weights. But my weight keeps creeping up, especially around my middle. Nothing I used to do seems to make any difference. It's so frustrating."*

I hear some version of this almost every day. And my response is: I believe you. Something has changed.

One of the mistakes we make when talking about weight is assuming that if someone's weight has changed, their behaviour must have changed. Sometimes it has. But sometimes the inputs are similar and the biology receiving those inputs has changed. That distinction is important.

Think About Hormones and Aging

We already accept this concept in other areas of medicine. For women, estrogen, progesterone and testosterone change as we get older. When those hormonal signals change, women can develop hot flashes, sleep problems, vaginal symptoms, changes in sexual function, changes in body composition and many other symptoms. We don't tell a woman experiencing hot flashes to simply try harder not to have them. We recognise that her underlying biology has changed.

And the same principle applies to men. As men get older, testosterone and DHEA levels can change. When clinically significant hormonal changes occur, they may be associated with decreased energy, changes in sexual function, changes in body composition and sometimes changes in mood. Again, we recognise that the underlying biology may have changed.

Weight Regulation Has Biology Too

Your body doesn't regulate weight with a calculator. Your gut, pancreas, fat tissue and brain are constantly communicating through hormones and neural signals that influence when you're hungry, when you feel full, how rewarding food feels, how your body handles glucose and how energy is stored.

Aging, changes in reproductive hormones, changes in body composition, insulin sensitivity, sleep, genetics, medications and previous weight loss can all influence the biological environment in which weight is being regulated. That helps explain something I hear from patients every day: "I'm doing what I've always done, but it isn't working anymore." That observation may be entirely valid.

So Where Do Weight-Loss Medications Fit In?

> *"How do medications like semaglutide and tirzepatide actually work? Aren't they really just putting me on a calorie-restricted diet?"*

The answer is both yes and no. Ultimately, weight loss still requires the body to take in less energy than it is using. These medications don't repeal the laws of energy balance. But the important question isn't simply that people eat less. It's why they eat less.

GLP-1 and GIP aren't inventions of pharmaceutical companies. They are part of our normal physiology, signalling molecules involved in communication between the digestive system, pancreas and brain. These medications act on those receptors and influence several processes involved in weight regulation, including hunger, fullness and satiety, cravings, the drive to eat, responses to food cues, glucose regulation, and insulin and glucagon signalling.

So these medications aren't simply commanding you to eat fewer calories. They are changing some of the biological signals that help determine how much you want to eat in the first place.

That's a Very Different Kind of Calorie Restriction

Imagine two people who both eat 1,500 calories today. The first person is dieting. By 7 p.m., she's hungry. She's thinking about food. She knows there is ice cream in the freezer. She would really like some, but she's already reached her calorie target. So she tells herself: "No. I've eaten my calories for today." That's cognitive restraint.

Now imagine the second person taking an effective weight-management medication. She finishes dinner and says: "I'm full. I don't really want anything else."

Both people may have consumed exactly the same number of calories. But biologically, those are very different experiences. One person is fighting the drive to eat. The other person's drive to eat has changed.

We Can Actually Measure This

In studies of semaglutide, participants consumed substantially fewer calories when allowed to eat freely. They also reported less hunger, greater fullness and satiety, fewer cravings and better control over eating.

The tirzepatide findings are particularly interesting. In a 2025 randomized study, people receiving tirzepatide ate approximately 525 fewer calories at a single unrestricted lunch after only three weeks compared with placebo. But what makes the study most revealing is that tirzepatide reduced hunger, food cravings, the tendency to overeat and responsiveness to food in the environment, while increasing feelings of fullness and satiety. Voluntary dietary restraint did not increase. In other words, people weren't simply becoming better at telling themselves not to eat. Their desire to eat was changing.

Researchers also detected changes in brain responses to highly palatable food cues, supporting the idea that these medications can affect the brain circuitry involved in appetite and food reward.

What Patients Often Describe as "Food Noise"

This may explain something patients frequently describe.

> *"I didn't realise how much I thought about food until I stopped thinking about it." · "I can have two bites and suddenly I'm finished." · "There are cookies sitting there and I know they're there. I just don't care."*

It isn't a formal medical diagnosis, but "food noise" is a useful description of the constant thoughts, cravings and environmental cues surrounding food that some people experience. For some patients, one of the most striking effects of these medications isn't simply that the scale moves. Food occupies less space in their brain.

This Doesn't Mean Lifestyle Doesn't Matter

Quite the opposite. Nutrition matters. Exercise matters. Resistance training matters enormously, particularly when losing weight, because our goal isn't simply to make someone lighter. We want to preserve muscle and improve body composition. Protein intake matters. Sleep matters. Alcohol matters. And the quality of the foods you eat matters even if you're eating less of them.

Medication shouldn't replace those things. Medication can make it biologically easier for those things to work.

> ***"Instead of simply telling someone 'Eat less. Exercise more. Try harder.' we can ask a much better question: What has changed in your biology, and how can we work with it rather than continually asking you to fight against it?"***

THE SIGNATURE WELLNESS TAKEAWAY

Your biology has changed. Therefore, the same inputs may no longer produce the same outputs.

Understanding that isn't an excuse to abandon lifestyle. It's a reason to stop treating weight as simply a failure of willpower and start treating it as the complex biological system that it is.

WANT TO KNOW MORE? — THE RESEARCH BEHIND THIS

One of the most interesting recent studies looked directly at how tirzepatide changes eating behaviour, not simply how much weight people lose. In this randomized 2025 Nature Medicine study, researchers gave participants an unrestricted meal and allowed them to eat as much as they wanted. After only three weeks, people receiving tirzepatide consumed approximately 525 fewer calories at the meal than those receiving placebo.

Perhaps most importantly for the question "Isn't this really just a calorie-restricted diet?", tirzepatide did not increase voluntary cognitive restraint. People weren't simply becoming better at consciously telling themselves not to eat. Their drive to eat was changing.

Martin CK, Carmichael OT, Carnell S, et al. Tirzepatide on ingestive behavior in adults with overweight or obesity: a randomized 6-week phase 1 trial. Nature Medicine. 2025;31:3141–3150. ***Read the full study***

CLINIC SPOTLIGHT

Chris Yap Young: Turning Weight Loss Into Long-Term Health

Losing weight is one goal. Preserving muscle, building strength and maintaining the results are equally important. That's why our Fitness & Nutrition Program, led by Chris Yap Young, is an important complement to medical weight optimization.

Chris brings more than 30 years of experience in personal training and wellness. His approach combines individualized nutrition, strength training, functional movement and practical lifestyle coaching. The program offers nutrition assessments and personalized plans, fitness assessments and exercise plans, ongoing accountability, and one-on-one personal training.

Whether you're taking a weight-management medication or working toward your goals without one, the focus is on helping you build a healthier, stronger body, not simply achieving a lower number on the scale.

> ***"Medications may help us lose weight, but muscle is what protects our future."***

If you're currently enrolled in our Weight Optimization Program, ask our team how Chris's services can complement your treatment plan.

FROM THE PRACTICE

LABORATORY TESTING AND YOUR CARE

More Testing Isn't Always *Better Healthcare*

Why Signature Wellness is changing its approach to additional laboratory testing

At Signature Wellness, we encourage you to be curious about your health, ask questions and take an active role in decisions about your care. Increasingly, our patients are doing just that: reading about new laboratory tests, listening to podcasts, exploring preventive health and asking whether additional testing might help them better understand their health. We welcome this interest.

But there is an important distinction between having more information and having information that helps you make better healthcare decisions.

Every Test Should Answer a Question

Before ordering any test, we should be able to answer three things:

1. What are we trying to find out?
2. How will the result help us make a decision?
3. What will we do if the result is abnormal, or normal?

A test is not simply a number on a laboratory report. An abnormal result may require additional testing, specialist consultation or treatment. Sometimes it is a harmless variation that creates unnecessary worry. A normal result, meanwhile, does not always rule out a medical condition. The real value of testing comes from understanding what the result means for you and what, if anything, should happen next.

Why We Are Making a Change

Our hormone and weight optimization programs include the investigations, interpretation and follow-up needed to deliver those services safely and effectively. Over time, we have also accommodated many requests for additional testing unrelated to these programs. As these requests have increased, so has the clinical and administrative time needed to review them, order appropriate investigations, interpret results and discuss next steps.

Going forward, we will no longer add unrelated tests to laboratory requisitions as an additional service within our hormone or weight optimization programs. We will, of course, continue to order the investigations clinically indicated for your existing program. For other health concerns or additional testing, we encourage you to discuss your questions with your family physician or another appropriate healthcare provider.

Your Questions Still Matter

This change does not mean that we are discouraging you from asking questions or participating in your healthcare decisions. Quite the opposite. We believe your questions deserve thoughtful consideration rather than simply adding another test to a requisition without a clear understanding of what we are looking for or what the result might mean.

> ***"Better healthcare isn't about ordering more tests. It's about asking better questions and using the answers to make informed decisions."***

Could This Become Our Next Signature Wellness Program?

We are exploring a more comprehensive preventive health service. The concept is simple: begin with your health questions, personal goals and medical history. Then determine which investigations, if any, are appropriate and how the findings could help guide your care. This would be a separate service, with its own assessment, clearly defined scope, professional fees and follow-up.

We are still exploring what this program might look like and would welcome your input.

Our philosophy remains unchanged: listen, understand, look at the facts rather than the fear, explore your options, decide together.

Help Us Shape Our Next Service

Would you be interested in a dedicated preventive health assessment at Signature Wellness?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] Possibly, depending on what is included
- [ ] No, my current program meets my needs

Please reply to this newsletter with your choice. Your feedback will help us determine whether to develop this service and what it should include.

COMING THIS OCTOBER

COMING OCTOBER 2026

Don't Let the Label Make the Decision.

As many of you know, I've been working on a book about breast cancer. It is intended to help patients understand their diagnosis, evaluate their options and participate meaningfully in decisions about their treatment and their lives.

One of the questions that has guided this project is: Who is looking after the rest of you? Breast cancer treatment is understandably focused on treating the cancer and reducing the risk of recurrence. But a woman is more than her diagnosis. She may also be dealing with severe menopausal symptoms, disrupted sleep, changes in sexual function, fatigue, emotional distress or the consequences of stopping treatments that previously helped her feel well. These concerns deserve attention too.

A Glimpse Inside the Book

When you receive a breast cancer diagnosis, it can feel as though your entire identity has been reduced to that diagnosis. Suddenly, conversations revolve around pathology reports, receptor status, recurrence risk and treatment decisions. All of those things matter enormously. But so do you. Your ability to sleep. Your relationships. Your sexuality. Your emotional well-being. Your ability to work, exercise and enjoy your life.

You deserve to understand not only what your treatment is intended to accomplish, but also what it may mean for the rest of your life. You deserve clear explanations, an understanding of the evidence and the opportunity to explore your options.

- *What does my particular diagnosis actually mean?*
- *What is my actual risk, in numbers I can understand?*
- *How much might a treatment reduce that risk?*
- *What are the potential costs of that treatment?*
- *What do we know? What are we less certain about? And what matters to me?*

> *"A recommendation is not the same as an informed decision. Breast cancer deserves your attention. It does not deserve more fear than your particular cancer justifies. Don't let the label make the decision."*

More details about publication and availability will follow.

SAVE THE DATE

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Mental Health Education and Connection Day

Presented by the Markham Stouffville Hospital Mental Health Program & collaborating partners

FEATURING KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Dr. George Arnold

Physician, educator, innovator, and expert in menopause, andropause, and holistic wellness

WHY NOW? Understanding Mental Health Through the Lifespan

I'm delighted to be speaking about an idea that has increasingly influenced how I practise medicine: we are not biologically identical to ourselves throughout our lives. From puberty and pregnancy to menopause and aging, our bodies and brains undergo important transitions.

I'll be exploring two related concepts — Biological Diversity and Biological Adaptability — and what they mean for understanding health throughout our lives. I hope you'll join me.

DATE AND TIME

Friday, October 23, 2026
8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

LOCATION

Cornell Community Centre
Rehearsal Hall
3201 Bur Oak Ave, Markham, ON

Free Admission · Complimentary Parking · Light Refreshments · Community Booths

REGISTER NOW — DEADLINE OCTOBER 16, 2026

UNTIL NEXT WEEK

ONE THOUGHT TO LEAVE YOU WITH

Whether we're discussing weight management, laboratory testing, breast cancer or the changes we experience throughout life, our approach remains the same:

Understand the evidence. Understand what it means for you. Take a practical next step.

Thank you for continuing to be an active participant in your healthcare.

Dr. George Arnold

Founder and Medical Director, Signature Wellness

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