

ActiveWellness

Learning and good health for carers

HANDY LIFTOUT

“This is for me.”

Inspiration!



Time Out
A gift to yourself!



Injury Prevention
Safely, safely



Home Safety
Tips guide!



Walking most days is Jane's 'me time'

"Thinking about things, working things through, listening to my ipod, singing along ... man, that gets rid of a lot of stress!"

At the age of 55, Jane has been a carer all of her married life for four children, two of whom have intellectual disabilities due to a genetic condition.

Like many middle-aged Kiwis, Jane now finds herself in the 'club sandwich' generation, supporting her ageing Mum, a husband with a heart condition, and her son Jake (who is 21 and resides in a supported living home). Jane's 26 year old daughter Melanie lives with her parents, with her six year old son.

Melanie lived independently for several years after Mickey was born, with significant help from Jane and her husband, Roger.

"Whenever I try to take time out for myself, lots of other pressures come along and I think, why am I bothering? But I began to feel that life was passing me by. I started to think about what I wanted ... about ways to not fall into that trap of always putting others first."

"But it was stressful for us all, and when there is a child involved their needs have to come first," says Jane.

"By living in the same house, we're able to give Melanie the practical support she needs, and back-up care for Mickey."

Despite her intensive family commitments, Jane juggles two paid jobs and studying for her Master's degree. With so many responsibilities, it's not surprising

that Jane has little time for exercise or other interests.

"I won a gym membership once, but it was too hard to get there. I've always done a lot of walking, but stopped because I felt I couldn't fit it into my day."

"Time for myself always gets pushed to the side because there are so many other commitments."

Several months ago Jane requested a copy of Wayne Halkyard's *Strength for Carers* 15 minute programme and



Your Feedback!

Carers NZ has received many letters from readers keen to try Wayne Halkyard's 15 minute Strength for Carers exercise programme. Since the launch of ActiveWellness in Family Care last year, we have distributed hundreds of free exercise bands! We have a limited number of these still available. To request yours, phone (0800) 777 797, email sara@carers.net.nz, or post your request to PO Box 155, Mangonui, Far North 0442.

LEONIE Thank you for the exercise band and programme for beginners. I keep these on my kitchen bench to remind me to fit the exercises into my day! They are simple to do, and I'm hoping my muscles will be stronger in no time. Even my six year old son is getting into the action!

JULIAN I have balance trouble and would like one of your exercise bands to give it a good try!

If we have your email address, we can send you updates between issues!

a free exercise band from Carers NZ. "I saw that it was something I could do at home, time permitting," she says.

"I've always tried to fit in some kind of exercise, so it's been a shock to find that I'm not as fit as I thought I was."

"The legs are okay, but my arms are weak ... the only things they've pushed for years are computer keys!"

Trying the *Strength for Caring* programme prompted Jane to reflect on her overall fitness and wellbeing. "It's made me realise that walking is what I most love to do. It makes such a difference to me mentally."

"Thinking about things, working things through, listening to my ipod, singing along ... man, that gets rid of a lot of stress!"

Jane now walks most days for general fitness, and does the exercise band programme twice a week to build strength.

She admits it can be hard to get out of bed for a walk during the colder months, and has developed strategies to stay on track.

"I find that I'm more likely to make the effort if I keep a diary that logs how many steps I've done each

day, and how long I've walked for."

"If I wear my pedometer and make regular notes in my diary, I'm so much more aware of how much exercise I'm getting (or not)."

"These little things get my brain in the right place to keep walking!" Jane says having a realistic plan, with achievable goals, also helps.

"I started by walking for 20 minutes, then 30, and now I include a big hill which takes my walk to 45 minutes each time. I walk in the mornings because I know I'm less likely to do it when I get home from work."

"I basically squeeze in as much as I can, and now I just feel really inspired." Her walks have provided quiet time for Jane to think and dream.

"I have done accounting work all of my life and have been in my current role for several years."

"I slipped into a comfort zone without even realising. My walks have given me so much more energy, and the time to take a good look at my life."

Jane has handed in her notice at work, and applied for a new job. "It's exciting to focus on my own future and to plan some things that are purely for me."

Inspiration!

Like Jane, you may want to feel stronger, have more energy, and improve your overall wellbeing!



Download music you love into an ipod or MP3 and listen while you walk!

Mix regular walks for heart health with our exercises for strength.



Wear a pedometer so you're aware of how many steps you take each day. Aim for 10,000!

An exercise journal can help you stay motivated.



JOHN Unfortunately, I had a fall soon after receiving my exercise band and was unable to use it until a few days ago. I have found it most helpful and, surprisingly, even find myself enjoying the challenges it gives me! I wanted to thank you and tell you how much I enjoy the arrival of each magazine.

NANCY Recently I asked for and received your ActiveWellness exercise band. As a carer for my elderly husband, I do most of everything at our place (maintaining the house and garden, and doing lots of lifting). When the illustrated exercise programme arrived and I saw the orange strip of rubber I thought "yeah, right!" After looking at the printout for a few days, I turned the page and saw the gorgeous, very fit man demonstrating the exercises. I thought well, if he can do it, I can do it! So here I am following Wayne's programme and, yes, breathing properly and figuring out how to do the exercises one by one. On wet, cold days, doing these exercises soon warms me up. All I can say now is thank you so much! I shall keep following the programme, which really has improved my breathing and fitness. I notice the difference when I am lifting heavy items, like the 20 kilo bags of pellets for our fire. *Strength for Caring* was a fantastic idea and I'm sure the programme has helped many others too.

Strength for Caring

42% of family carers receive strains, sprains and other injuries as a result of their caring role. This can happen through lifting and helping with transfers ... or out of the blue with a slip, trip, fall, or other accident.

It takes time to recover from any injury but, with guidance from your GP or physiotherapist, you may be able to continue exercising ... maintaining your overall wellbeing while your injury heals.

Carers NZ and national bodybuilding champion Wayne Halkyard have spoken to many family carers who want to stay fit while recovering from an injury.

Our *Strength for Caring* programme, which involves seven basic exercises using a stretchy, inexpensive exercise band or cord, can be done at a gentle pace.

It's ideal for those who are new to exercise ... who may have an impairment or illness ... or who are in caring situations, wishing to build strength and prevent injuries.

Try our routine just twice a week initially, and do more 'sets' of each exercise as you get stronger.

Wayne says it's possible to continue exercising despite an injury, but urges carers to first seek advice from a health professional.

"You can hurt yourself further if you try to do any type of physical activity without medical guidance. And if you have an injury, don't ignore it. It may be more serious than you think! Get it checked out."



In this issue of ActiveWellness, Wayne shares his tips for those recovering from an injury. His advice is also useful for those who are recovering from surgery or an illness.

"The main rule of thumb for anyone is that if you feel pain while exercising, *don't go there!*" he says. "Carefully reverse your pattern of movement, and don't try that particular movement again without professional advice."

"If you do get the all-clear to exercise, despite an injury or health trauma, slow your movements right down during the healing process. Be aware of your body, and listen to what it tells you."

Carers who aren't able to use certain muscles or limbs while an injury heals might be allowed to exercise other parts of the body. Again, seek advice.

Wayne says it's important to warm up before any kind of exercise, and to stretch, warm down, and rehydrate after physical activity.

"Those are important guidelines for everyone, and especially for busy carers!"

Request our 15 minute Strength for Caring exercise programme, and a free exercise band for beginners!

A koha of \$5 is welcome to assist with postage costs. Send your request to PO Box 133, Mangonui, Far North 0442.

Create a free walking, running or cycling programme at www.active-smart.co.nz/





Exercising with an injury

Activity might help you to recover and stay well ... but get medical advice first, says Wayne.

It can be frustrating to slow down and give your body time to heal after an injury, illness, surgery, or other trauma. Exercise might be an important part of your recovery. But doing too much or the wrong kinds of activity can aggravate injuries, or even cause new ones. We don't want that! Here are ideas to keep you strong and flexible (and prevent further injuries).

Warm up!

Start slowly, moving smoothly through your exercises. Keep movements shallow at first. Give your body a chance to warm up. This will protect you from strains, and help to pump blood through your body so you can exercise safely (and more vigorously).

Middle management

Tense your abs (midsection) before any movement to stabilise your body, and ensure correct posture for all types of exercise.

Heads up!

Shoulders back, head up, feet apart ... correct posture will help to prevent injuries, and strengthen the muscles that keep you properly aligned.

Easy does it

Listen to your body. If you feel sharp twinges or pain, stop immediately and seek professional advice.

Keep it simple

Only do 12 repetitions of each exercise, with a good break of 60 to 90 seconds between sets. Believe it or not, your muscles will strengthen as you rest!

Stretch and recover

After exercise you need to stretch and re-lengthen your muscles. Stretching will minimise soreness after exercise, and optimise your mobility. Stretch slowly and smoothly in a range of motion that feels comfortable. Never bounce when you are in a fully stretched position. Hold the deepest part of each stretch for at least seven seconds.

Rehydrate

Drink plenty of water before and after exercise. Our bodies need one litre of extra fluid for every 60 minutes of vigorous exercise!

You can download all Family Care ActiveWellness liftouts at www.carers.net.nz, or phone us to request printed copies, (0800) 777 797!

Download *Strength for Caring* at www.carers.net.nz, or phone (0800) 777 797.

Stay Safe At Home!

Room by room tips from ACC

One in three injuries happens at home. In fact, you're more likely to receive an injury at home than at work, on the road, or playing sport. We have asked ACC for some common sense suggestions to reduce injury risks at home. We have chosen these tips especially for families with health and disability needs. You can also listen to our injury prevention and home safety five minute features at www.familycareradio.net.nz. These 'listen and learn' discussions with ACC are part of the new national wellbeing and learning initiative developed for carers as part of the Government's Action Plan for the Carers' Strategy.



Find more home safety tips and advice at www.homesafety.co.nz - a website ACC has developed with other partners to help New Zealanders avoid injuries and accidents at home.

Bathroom

Bathrooms are where clutter can accumulate.

Is the bathroom set up so you and the person you're supporting can move around safely? Has everything you need been placed nearby (clothes, towels, toiletries etc)?

Keep a cordless phone handy so you won't have to go to another room if the phone rings, leaving your family member or friend in a vulnerable situation.

Check the bathroom environment for potential hazards (spill shampoo, a bottle on the floor).

Are towels within easy reach?

Is the equipment you'll need in the correct place - or has it been moved?

Wear sensible nonslip footwear, and keep a towel on the floor so you can easily clean up spills if they happen.

Do you have handrails in the right places for safety, and easier lifting and transferring?

How can the bathroom be set up or equipped so the person you



support can be as independent as possible? Bath boards, handrails, shower chairs, and other aids are helpful for everyone.

Kitchen

The kitchen is the most dangerous room in the house, so the less traffic the better!

If you and your family member are in the kitchen at the same time, give them verbal reports so they know what's happening, even if they can't see you. If you are walking behind the person with a hot pot from the oven, for example, tell them.

Keep your kettle near cups, tea and coffee so you don't have to carry a jug of boiling water across the kitchen.

Only boil the water you need, or boil the kettle once and transfer the water you don't use immediately to a thermos flask. Often thermos flasks are easier to use than a kettle.

Mop up spills as soon as they happen, and pick up food from the floor quickly; fruit and vegetables can be very slippery!

Avoid feeding your pet or giving them scraps in or near the kitchen. People often trip over cats or dogs lingering around a busy area waiting for food. Pets are great companions, but they can also be a hazard!



Keep everything that your family member will need nearby to prevent them over-reaching and toppling over. If you're going out, leave things they will want or need during the day on the kitchen bench, or at the front of the pantry or fridge.

Place milk for the day in a small, easy-to-use milk jug so your family member doesn't have to struggle with a bulky milk carton.

Living area



Assess living habits for risk. Do you balance on a stool or your tiptoes to close the curtains each night, for example? It might be safer to use a grab stick so you don't have to lean or reach so much. Think of ways to reduce safety risks for tasks like this.

Keep living areas free of clutter. If the person you support will be alone for a great portion of the day, leave what they need within easy reach (phone, remote control, radio, snacks, a thermos of hot water for tea or coffee, a blanket, books or magazines, a pencil or pen, or any medication they will need to take).

At lunch time, many people can safely push a trolley, but may find carrying a plate full of food difficult. You could set up a table in the kitchen so it's not too far to carry food, or use a wheeled trolley (check whether the person can manage the trolley with food on it).

Make use of low level storage to reduce clutter (put books and magazines in plastic boxes, for example).

Communication

Set up a communication book for visitors to write in so that family and friends get a picture of what has happened during the day. Maybe your friend or family member complained about pain, or a poor night's sleep, or forgot to take their medication. Some people are keen on these books, some aren't, it's worth checking out.



If the person you support has a fall

Often people fall over, remain conscious, and do not require an ambulance. But it's wise to get help if you are unsure. If the person you support has had a fall, and is talking to you coherently, make them as comfortable as possible. If you can, help them to get up. This is better than you trying to lift them up. Perhaps you could push a sturdy armchair over to the person so they can use it to climb upright, or get the person to crawl to a sturdy piece of furniture. People can often go from all fours to sitting on a chair without standing upright completely.

After a fall, it is worth seeing a GP to establish the reason for the fall. People don't fall over because they are old. A fall can be a sign of infection, or simply that the person tripped on a physical hazard. Think together about ways you can prevent falls in your home. For more ideas, download ACC's *Standing Up To Falls* booklet at www.acc.co.nz

It's a good idea for you and the person you support to practice how to get up safely after a fall at home



Look for a sturdy piece of furniture (preferably a chair). Bend your knees up and roll onto your side (a). Push yourself up so you are in a side-sitting position (b). Move into a four-point kneeling position (c). Crawl or drag yourself over to the chair. Put your inside hand on the chair. Then bring your outside leg up ready to push yourself into a kneeling position. Push yourself up with your outside knee and your inside hand on the chair (d). Pivot your bottom around and sit on the chair.

Rest before trying to move. Rest at any time you need to. Rest and try again if you don't succeed getting up the first time.

If you or someone in your family has a fall or is injured, get treatment as soon as possible. Don't wait until you feel better, as this can make an injury worse and your recovery might take longer. Getting ACC cover is simple: your doctor, physiotherapist, or other treatment provider will submit an ACC claim for you. To learn about making an ACC claim, visit www.acc.co.nz or phone (0800) 101 996.



Did you know that the most dangerous liquid in your home could be in your bathroom tap?



40% of New Zealand homes have dangerously hot water. Ask a registered plumber to check yours and turn it down if necessary. It's easy to do and sure beats the alternative of being injured. To find out more on how to stay safe around your home, visit www.homesafety.co.nz

