

Issue 1, Winter 2008

ActiveWellness

Learning and good health for carers

HANDY LIFTOUT

*Stay Safe,
Stay Well*



*Your programme
Just for carers!*



*Balance!
A family strategy*



*Personal Care
Self protection*



Wellbeing and learning

It's national, it's new, it's for you!

ACC is developing a new carer wellbeing and learning programme, in partnership with Carers NZ, other non-government organisations, professional experts, and government agencies. Welcome to ActiveWellness, one of the first wellbeing initiatives supported by ACC. The wellbeing and learning programme is one of the first outcomes of the Government's new Carers' Strategy! Other initiatives for this programme will be announced soon.

The idea for ActiveWellness came from Carers NZ chair Jan Moss. Jan cares at home for her 25 year old high needs daughter, Becky.



Now 60, the former nurse has had a few health scares of her own in recent years.

"I started to realise that I was mortal, and I started to feel mortal!" she laughs.

Like many carers, Jan is conscious of the need to stay well, because Becky depends on her. A healthy diet, regular walks with the dog, monthly massages, gardening, and catching up on sleep during respite breaks are all part of Jan's careful plan to preserve her own wellness.

Recently, service hiccups for Becky have caused strain for Jan.

"My wellbeing is integrally tied to Becky's services. It's amazing how quickly you can become ground down if you're not able to have time just for yourself."

Jan hopes the ActiveWellness programme will help carers think of ways to put their own needs first when this is possible.

"It's great for carers to hear that their wellness matters too. They are so used to putting themselves last that they feel guilty if they have any time out or treats just for them."

Caring can be emotionally and physically demanding, and like many carers Jan has experienced strains and injuries. Learning how to care safely, and how to strengthen the muscles used for tasks such as lifting, are important for many carers, says Jan.

"There is overwhelming evidence that teaching carers some basic weight bearing and strength building exercises increases their wellbeing, and allows them to continue in their caring role."

"I am looking forward to working with Wayne Halkyard to make sure our wellbeing information and exercise programmes are relevant for carers."

"And I'll be doing the exercises myself!"

Swimming is a great way to stay in shape,

Swimming doesn't jar your body or your joints, and is especially good for people who are unfit or recovering from a pre-existing injury.

Pool-based exercise is good for all ages. Whether you do this on your own or as part of a class, you will increase your flexibility, improve your cardiovascular health, and reduce stress!

If you don't like formal exercise, try a few lengths at the pool when you have time. Start off slowly and build up

to an amount that feels good.

Don't let embarrassment or self-consciousness stop you from swimming! You can always visit the pool at quiet times.

Look at your Community Notice Board for information about your local pool, or phone your local Council.

You can also sign up at www.activesmart.co.nz to create a walking, running or cycling plan to complement your swimming.

Send your ActiveWellness feedback to info@carers.net.nz

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



Your Programme!

ActiveWellness will provide:

- Guidance about how to avoid common carer injuries
- Articles about carers and how they are getting fitter, staying well, feeling better!
- Information about free programmes offered by ACC and other organisations to support your wellbeing goals
- Advice about caring tasks so you know what to do, or how to access help ... and reduce life stress
- Lifestyle and dietary articles to improve wellbeing
- Tips about useful equipment and services to make life easier for you and your family
- Advice from wellbeing experts, life coaches, inspiring New Zealanders ... and other carers, who are the experts about what might help all carers!

Make A Start!

Last year Wayne Halkyard won the NZ National Masters bodybuilding championship for men aged 40 to 50. Wayne mentors many older people, those recovering



from injuries, and disabled members of his community who seek his help to make positive lifestyle changes.

Wayne believes that simple steps will deliver enduring good health at any age.

"Very vigorous exercise such as running isn't for everyone, in fact it can be the worst form of fitness for many people. Slow, steady, consistent routines, such as a walk most days, will

burn fat and keep you fit, while a bit of strength-building exercise each week will help you care safely!"

Wayne has designed a basic strength building programme especially for carers using an elastic exercise band or ordinary household items. Wayne will demonstrate the exercises in our next issue of ActiveWellness!

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 the 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. ACC will review your claim and let you know if it has been accepted. If your claim is declined, ACC will tell you why. If you disagree with ACC's decision, you can ask for a review. To learn about making an ACC claim, visit www.acc.co.nz or phone (0800) 101-996.

Charmeyne: “Balance is about family”

After a spate of injuries, Auckland carer Charmeyne Te Nana-Williams sought advice about lifting and transferring. Now wellbeing is a family affair.

Each day, after dropping her six year old twin daughters at school, Charmeyne takes advantage of her handiest fitness tool: the driveway.

Charmeyne will turn 40 this year, and provides 24/7 support for her husband, Peter, who was seriously injured in a sporting accident several years ago.

She can hear Peter if he needs her, while getting an aerobic workout dashing up and down the couple's steep drive.

“It might not seem as glamorous as other ways to keep fit, but it's convenient and it works for me!”



Charmeyne is no stranger to exercise. As a young athlete she did outrigger canoeing and played netball, and has always been active.

Caring for Peter requires more than fitness, though.

“I'm small and Peter's big. We've carefully thought about how to minimise the amount of manual handling Peter needs, but I did go through a period where I was getting strains and injuries.”

“I believe they were caused by stress. I was often tense,



and that can make you careless, or just not as flexible. Stress, and lack of knowledge about safe handling, made me vulnerable to injuries.”

Charmeyne says it's common for carers to ignore niggles and soldier on without treatment (“that's what I did”), but she was proactive in other ways.

“My biggest worry is that if I don't look after myself, I can't keep my family together. It's a great motivator. I don't let myself bury my head in the sand. If there's a problem, I look for a solution for the sake of my family.”

Charmeyne and Peter's goal is that he will walk and talk again. His rehab activities have become a way for the family to exercise and be active together.

Recently Charmeyne and Peter partnered with their nearby WestWave swimming and gym complex, creating an activity programme for West Auckland disabled people and their families. Charmeyne has also joined the gym to strengthen her abdominal muscles, partly to avoid more caring injuries.

Peter, Charmeyne and their daughters regularly take to the pool as a way to have fun together, while supporting Peter's need to maintain and build strength. Their commitment is paying off: Charmeyne has fewer strains and recently, on a family visit to a mineral pool, Peter walked several steps during their swim.

“The average person would not understand what that meant for us,” says Charmeyne. “When you have a serious injury like Peter's, people often write you off. We were so rapt! We were running to keep up with him!”

Charmeyne and Peter also use therapeutic treatments such as massage as part of their family's wellbeing strategy, in Charmeyne's case to help her relax.

“It's not a luxury. It's part of what we do to stay well.”

Create a free walking, running or cycling programme at www.activesmart.co.nz/

Wellness Basics

With Wayne Halkyard

Wellbeing is about the whole of our lives. If one thing is out of kilter, we can be too. It won't always be possible for you to exercise or focus on your own wellbeing. Keep this self-care chart somewhere handy. It will remind you to get most of what you need, as often as you can!



Years ago my Dad developed Alzheimer's. I have eight siblings, and some of us decided to take turns caring for Dad so he wouldn't have to live in a rest home. Guess what? I couldn't hack it! My sisters did the hard yards. I learned a lot about myself, and about caring, during those years. I have absolute admiration for those of you who support someone 24/7. I also understand the toll it might be taking on you. I have developed some strength building exercises for carers, and will show you these next time. Until then, have a think about these wellbeing basics.

1



FUEL Start your day with a healthy breakfast cereals, fruit, yoghurt, grains, porridge. Your body needs energy to sustain you through the day. Nana was right!

2



HEALTH CHECKS When did you last have important medical and dental checks? Don't leap into any new exercise regime without talking to your GP.

3



SLEEP Carers often say their sleep is interrupted, or that they don't get enough quality sleep. Try to make this a priority if you feel tired, grumpy, or unwell.

4



FRESH FOODS We're all likely to make poor food choices if we're busy or stressed. Invest in fresh fruit, vegetables, and wholesome meal ingredients to resist the lure of junk!

5



EXERCISE This can be any kind of activity that raises your heart rate for at least 30 minutes. Cardiovascular health underpins wellbeing. A daily walk is great!

6



REGULAR MEALS It's so easy for carers to skip meals. It can be hard if life is chaotic, but try to care for yourself too with nutritious foods, snacks, and plenty to drink each day.

7



SELF HELP Websites, books, DVDs... there are lots of options to learn about nutrition, fitness, exercise, and self-motivation. I like *Nutrition for Life* by Catherine Saxelby.

8



TRY QUITTING! The older you get, the more this habit will catch up with you. Quitting is hard, but your quality of life will improve, and you'll probably live longer. Seriously.

9



BALANCE Time with friends, walking the dog, meditation, listening to music, training for a marathon, prayer, sport. Can you find a window to do more of what you really enjoy?

What's that pain trying to tell you?

By Cam Bateman



Do you often have aches and pains that don't go away after a hot shower or a good night's sleep? If you do, it's worth reviewing your lifestyle, or rethinking how you perform everyday caring tasks.

Not all discomfort, pain and injury (or DPI as it's called by health and safety professionals) happens suddenly. Usually it happens gradually, often as a result of a combination of factors.

Forcing your body into unnatural postures, lifting objects that are too heavy, doing one task over and over without taking a break ... these are

factors that can contribute to DPI.

Personal factors can also play a part. If you're unfit or under stress, you have an even greater chance of getting injured.

DPI usually starts as a result of not using your body as it was designed to be used.

Get on top of discomfort, pain and injury before it gets on top of you!

The good news is, we now know a

lot about the things that lead to DPI.

Researchers have pinpointed 7 key contributing factors:

This means that if we address all the different factors involved, we have the best chance of preventing and managing problems.

The key is: to look at the combination of factors behind DPI, and consider what changes may help to reduce your risks.



Caution - high risk!
When helping to transfer someone, they shouldn't hold onto you or your clothing, because it might be difficult for you to disengage, and you could be pulled off balance. This is unsafe for both of you, increasing your risk of falls or injuries.

When helping to lift or transfer someone, saying 'Ready, steady, stand' is better than counting '1, 2, 3 Go'. If you use numbers, the person you're supporting may start to move on the count of 3, before you're ready! Giving a clear command helps to coordinate everyone, and makes the task safer.

7 Factors That Contribute To DPI

The different things that together influence whether we experience discomfort, pain and injury

- Individual factors: things you can't change ... your age, height, and gender, and your diet, fitness, how much sleep you get, whether you smoke or drink etc.
- Stress factors: things at home and work that make you feel stressed (relationship concerns; money worries, fears about job security etc)
- Work organisation: hours of work, how you organise them, taking breaks, the kind of work you do etc.
- Awkward postures and physical layout for care tasks: do you use the right equipment, is the equipment designed for the task you are doing and set at correct heights etc.
- Repetition: do you have to perform the same tasks regularly, performing the same task for an afternoon with high frequency etc.
- Load and force: what are the weights that you regularly lift and move ... equipment, people etc.
- Environmental factors: is your environment safe for the caring tasks you do ... lighting, room layout, etc.

Range Of Motion

Your body is designed to move!

- Joints and muscles need to move to stay healthy. Tense or rigid postures restrict the flow of blood through your body's tissues. If held tense, your body will feel fatigued and won't be able to function properly.
- Gentle movement helps the flow of blood by gently compressing and relaxing the pressure on arteries and veins, thus helping to pump blood around your body.



→ It's a myth that people who experience pain have identifiable injury

→ It's a myth that DPL in the back can be dealt with by simply changing the way a person lifts

→ It's a myth that work that requires manual handling is hazardous to your health

→ It's a myth that you should let your pain guide you as to how much exercise and activity you do

First Carer Wellbeing Programme!

Carers in the Far North community of Doubtless Bay are reviewing their overall wellbeing, and learning how to safely perform everyday care tasks.

Carers often neglect their own wellness, and have a high risk of care-related injuries.

A survey carried out by Carers NZ during last year's Carers' Strategy consultation period found that 42% of the 650 respondents had suffered a care-related injury. Most of these carers had not sought any treatment for their injury, nor had they made a claim with ACC.

Since the wellbeing of families can hinge on a primary carer's ability to continue in their role, this high injury rate is a concern.

A small group of carers of different ages and situations has agreed to meet regularly to identify areas where they feel vulnerable: physically, mentally, or practically due to lack of knowledge about how to safely carry out basic care tasks.

Each carer will have a one-on-one assessment with Wayne Halkyard, Carers NZ's ActiveWellness advisor (see his advice for all carers).

Some carers have developed their own chronic conditions, making caring for another family member

difficult. Wayne is working intensively with these carers to improve their strength and physical wellbeing, to reduce the effects of stress, and to try to minimise problems such as fatigue and depression.

Carers NZ is also ensuring the carers know about free ACC programmes to support their wellbeing, such as ActiveSmart, the national Tai Chi programme for over 65s, and ACC's free home safety checks service. ACC also offers a falls prevention programme in many communities across the country.

By helping carers feel stronger and looking at ways to improve their wellbeing, the Far North initiative will identify what steps might make the biggest difference for other carers.

One of the participants is 48 year old Maraea, a single Mum who has diabetes and arthritis, and lives with her 83 year old Dad, who has dementia.

Maraea's GP has suggested making lifestyle changes to improve her diabetes and arthritis, which are affecting her ability to care for her Dad. Wayne is working with Maraea to achieve her wellness goals, and sustain her 24/7 caring role.

"I have become socially isolated because of my health and caring for Dad. I'm looking forward to trying ways to make positive changes, and to meeting other carers. Perhaps we'll be able to cheer each other on."

Get active.
Get smart.
Get clicking.

www.activesmart.co.nz



Go online and get a **free** personalised training programme. Complete 6-12 week training plan for cycling, walking or running, with nutrition guide, videos and illustrations, regional weather forecasts and personalised training tips.

