

Support at home

Caring better together

getting through

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just in case

Christchurch readers have offered advice about what to do and how to cope after a major emergency. Our thoughts are with the people of Christchurch as they recover from a second major earthquake, which occurred as this issue of *Family Care* went to press.

The things that get us through a time like this...

The *Press* distributor who saw me in the driveway on Saturday morning and came back to see if we were okay ... the wonderful people at the Waimakariri District Council emergency centre who managed to track the whereabouts of an elderly friend I was concerned about in an hour and a half and then made a follow up call two days later ... and the gentleman at our local supermarket giving away (yes, giving away) bunches of fresh daffodils as people left the building. Then there was the bus driver who had lost his home but was still working with a smile on his face and a kind word. A little later in the week I took my two little granddaughters to visit their great-grandmother in her rest home. The girls gave huge hugs to some of the ladies, and their smiles said it all. Sometimes that is all we need: a big hug and we feel better.

All the best, Kathie Hughes



Our *Support At Home* sponsor is Access, one of New Zealand's leading healthcare organisations, specialising in home-based healthcare and support for New Zealand families since 1927!

PHOTO: LEONIE MOORE + ISTOCK/AGOSTINOSANGEL



My husband has Multiple Myeloma cancer. Each morning after his shower he has a warm foot bath. We take great care to ensure he develops no pressure sores. Early this year his cancer flared up again. After six weeks in hospital, on coming home the nurse called in regularly. She recommended a daily foot bath: warm water with a few drops of tea tree oil. Thought others might like this tip also! We decided to celebrate our wedding anniversary in a special way this year and spent the night at a nice hotel located in Cathedral Square. The Aussie Plate chose the same night for the Canterbury earthquake. Husband, who at the time was using a walking frame, had to manage eight flights of stairs down to ground level. Life is precious, so we smile and keep going.

MONICA RENWICK, CHRISTCHURCH

Pearls of wisdom

Thank you for your kind thoughts for all of us down here in Canterbury. The earthquake was certainly a very frightening experience, and the constant aftershocks have been very unnerving.

We were fortunate to have had no damage to our house or contents, though we were without water for two days and power for half a day.

Unfortunately our seven year old son got gastroenteritis from the water, which we boiled, but obviously not for long enough.

I thought others might learn from our experiences in the event of a similar emergency. Here are some tips!

Don't boil water in an electric jug (this is how our son got gastro - we were only boiling it once) or, if you do, boil it three times in a row, or with the lid off and for at least three minutes. Our GP's nurse strongly recommends boiling water for at least that time in a large saucepan.

Have a water supply ready at all times

(most of us got caught out with this!). Set aside enough for three litres per person, with extra for pets, cleaning teeth, washing hands, washing vegetables, washing dishes, and so on.

Place a bowl of water in your bathroom sink for hand washing, and a plastic tumbler at the sink

for cleaning teeth.

Communication is so vital, so keep a landline phone handy. If you have a phone jack in the bedroom, even better, to have easy access to a phone after any emergency. Many people use cordless phones these days, but they won't work without power. Our mobile network (Telecom prepaid) was out for five days, but our landline phone worked. Even if calls aren't possible, a cell phone by the bed acts as a great torch, and you may be one of the lucky ones whose network works!

Have a list of next door neighbours' phone numbers ready and up to date, so you can all keep in touch if the phone system is still working. And after an emergency, if you are able to, visit immediate neighbours to see if they are okay.

A torch (with working batteries) in each bedroom is sensible. After the earthquake our power went off instantly, leaving us to grope in the dark trying to find our torch in the kitchen. A torch located in the kitchen

and lounge areas, with charged up or new batteries, provides extra back-up.

Don't use candles. I did, and after a quake you'll generally experience aftershocks, which could tip the candles over and cause a fire. Fortunately, this didn't happen to our candles, but it's better not to use them.

Keep a pair of shoes or slippers by the bed each night, so you can put them on quickly if needed (beware of glass).

Open cupboards and fridges very carefully afterwards in case things fall out on top of you.

Have a back-up heating supply that works. Our gas heater was stowed away in our garage, and we found out to our disappointment (on a very cold morning) that it had an impaired hose and couldn't be used.

Have a back-up cooking source, like a portable cooker, because you sooo need a coffee afterwards! Plus some areas here in Christchurch were without power for a week, and these cookers were a godsend.

What would happen if you couldn't flush the loo for awhile? I used a splash of disinfectant each time the loo was used while we were waiting for everything to come back on. Our City Council suggested putting double plastic bags in the loo bowl for 'number twos', which could then be disposed of in our rubbish wheelee bins. Our Mum, who is 85 and lives on her own, used a two litre ice cream

container for this purpose, then buried it in her garden before shifting to stay with family for awhile.

Fill up hot water bottles and use lots of blankets to keep warm if you have no working heating source.

I hope these ideas help others who may experience an emergency like we did. If a disaster occurs in the early hours of the morning, or at any time really, you will be in a state of shock. Planning ahead will help you to think and act clearly.

Thanks again for all the good wishes of our fellow New Zealanders. We have been blown away by your generosity and help.

LEONIE MOORE

Close to home

Like everyone else who did not have a lot of damage after the earthquake, I feel very guilty, and don't know why really. I guess it is that we feel for those who suffered losses or fell ill. I am and have been a nervous wreck since the big one and subsequent continual aftershocks. As a result of my nervousness I have been taking Rescue Remedy, which helps a lot (until of course the next tremor). It took me days to venture out, not to nose or take photos but to get some kind of ease for my active imagination and nerves. It is quite surreal seeing all the buildings and homes damaged and flattened, and though I felt sick at the mayhem, it was reassuring to see people resuming their lives. One thing I was pleased about at our house was that we did not have to go anywhere, as for several years I have set stock aside: battery radios, gas for a cooker, and torches everywhere. Our power was off for a time after the quake, nor could the toilet be used. Yes, we arranged a 'thunder box' in the back shed until the all clear. For hot water, I used our old two ring cooker. Neighbours had a meeting to see if anything was needed,

but otherwise we all stayed put, and felt safer that way. We were lucky to have both landline and cell phones, so I was able to reassure our daughter in Auckland that we were okay. It truly is sensible to have some food stocks, water in big containers, and a gas ring of some kind handy for any eventuality.

ELLY

Thanks to MSD

Our support service contacted me to say that workers would be unavailable in the week following the quake. This had the potential to be very disruptive for me, but I was impressed to receive a call from staff at Ministry of Social Development to check whether my son (who receives an invalid's benefit) was okay, and to give me a number to contact should we need any assistance. We are all told to be prepared by having an emergency kit ready in case of disaster (water, food, torches etc) but the quake has prompted me to also have ready an emergency kit for my son should we have to leave the house in a hurry: continence supplies, clothes, medications, and other essential items. It struck me that we could leave home at a moments' notice, but life would be very difficult if I could not very quickly get my hands on all of these things for my son. A good lesson for us here, and for all.

CHERYL

Stock up!

I live in East Christchurch and though we did not suffer much damage, those around us did in different ways and streets. Why then have I since experienced bad nerves and feelings of guilt? I have had to use Rescue Remedy just to keep steady between quakes. I guess others in our older age group are feeling the same: nerves on edge, little sleep, feeling guilty, and everything else related. The

continual aftershocks are almost like brain washing, waiting for them to increase as the scientists (bless them) keep telling us they might continue, or decrease, as the case may be. We were well stocked with food, battery radios, torches and water in containers, and have been for several years now, rotating stock and renewing along the way. After losing power, we were able to connect our LPG cylinder to a two ring gas cooker to boil water and have a good breakfast (after checking out neighbours, some of whom were using their BBQs for this purpose). We also rigged up an old camping toilet in our back shed. Our neighbourhood had an early morning meeting following the quake, and we've checked on each other since. As the powers that be say these shocks may go on for months, we must strengthen ourselves, and continue to look out for our neighbours. Thanks for listening.

NANCY

Although I am involved in training care and support workers, I am also in the 'older person' age bracket, and would like to share something of this shaky business we are experiencing here in Canterbury. Night-time is really frightening for people living alone. We have had friends bring their nightwear and toothbrushes to our home and spend the night knowing someone else is in the house. They have a cuppa in the morning then are away for the day. People have said "if you survived the quake, you will be okay with the aftershocks". That is not at all helpful in the middle of the night, with tremors rippling through our homes! Apart from sharing meals, there was not a lot more we could do. Being together does help. We all need to sleep as best we can, as sleep deprivation can lead to accidents and poor decisions.

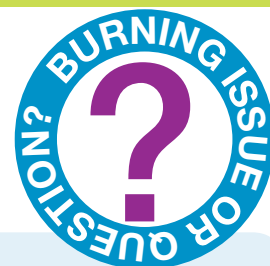
BARBARA SCOTT, AMIDA TRAINING, ACCESS

WIN!

Win one of five copies of *Our Shaky Isles*, a book filled with practical advice about how to prepare for, deal with, and recover from an earthquake. The book is available nationwide from shops and supermarkets. RRP\$9.90. Those who find it difficult to get out to shop can request a copy of the book by phoning (0800) 500 175. To enter our *Shaky Isles* draw, see our coupon on page 4!



Our burning question in this issue is answered by Access occupational therapist Jo Swamy, who identifies equipment and techniques to help Access clients maintain their independence with everyday tasks.



Q Wheelchair ABCs

After my wife's stroke we learned the hard way to 'tuck in her wings' (her elbows) when wheeling from room to room. It's so easy to damage frail skin and cause an injury. The same thing can happen with the foot plates. I wonder if your experts have general advice about safe use of a wheelchair to protect skin and limbs, and also how to prevent painful pinching when taking the chair apart or putting it together during outings (this has happened to me many times). My second question is how to maintain hygiene on the wheelchair seat, wheels, foot plates, and handles. My wife has continence issues, and the seat of her chair does need frequent cleaning. What's the best way to keep the wheelchair clean? Other readers might also benefit from your answers. Thank you.

KELVIN, SOUTH ISLAND

Often people find foot plates too damaging to skin and paintwork for indoor use, and mainly use them outdoors. Without the plates, your wife's stroke-affected foot may tend to 'drag', risking injury; she needs to cross her legs, with the stroke-affected foot on top, so this can't happen.

Any sharp points on the wheelchair could be padded, possibly by wrapping and/or taping crepe bandage or similar soft material around them. Alternatively, ensure your wife's skin (including feet) is covered to prevent skin tears.

Many helpful accessories are available for wheelchairs, including moulded 'gutter' arm rests with pommels for hands, and velcro straps to keep stroke-affected arms and elbows safely in place.

Ask your Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist for advice about available aids and how to source them.

For cleaning, check whether the cushion provided with the wheelchair has a protective cover; most do these days, and you should perhaps have two. These covers are usually hand or machine washable, so if there is a spill or continence accident, you can remove the soiled one for washing, and replace it with your clean spare.

The frame of the chair can be wiped down with a damp cloth as necessary. It's advisable to treat chrome surfaces with a silicone polish to prevent rust forming. You may want to have both indoor and outdoor wheelchairs. You probably wouldn't get funding for two chairs, so this could be an expensive solution. Seek advice from your wife's Therapists.

To fold the wheelchair for transport, remove the cushion and foot plates so it's lighter to lift into and out of the car. Pull the seat fabric upwards in the middle, with one hand on the front edge and one along the back edge; the seat will 'concertina' inwards so the chair can fold for transport. To lift the chair into the car, tip it back onto its wheels so the castors sit inside the car or the boot. Then rock the chair forward onto the castors, lifting the back wheels up and into the car.

To put the chair back together, press on the metal edges of the seat with the base of your hand, and it will unfold. Remember not to grab the arm rests to lift the chair: you may be left holding these and nothing else! For safety, always ensure the brakes of the wheelchair are fixed when your wife is getting into or out of the chair.

Letters
+ Advice!

Family Care often receives letters and emails from support workers and those receiving help at home about issues they want to share with others.

Do you have a burning question or issue for our Support At Home team?

Post them to PO Box 133, Mangonui, Far North 0442 or email them to info@carers.net.nz

home COMFORT

With a bit of help, Janet is determined to live independently at home.

In 2009, Janet Glue fractured her hip following a fall in the garden when she became entangled in the garden hose. She spent five days in hospital.

The accident was a real setback for Janet, who lives alone. However, with the help and encouragement of her support workers, Janet continues to enjoy her independence at home.

“When my husband was sick I had help from two wonderful support workers for some years. Then, just after he died, little did I realise how soon I would need their help again, this time for myself. I have been lucky to have the same two workers who supported my husband. Both have been so helpful and caring, and for this I am very grateful,” says Janet.

When Janet was discharged from hospital she questioned how she would cope, because she could not walk unaided.

“My son told the hospital that I would not manage at his home because of the stairs. I was supplied with a bed loop, two walkers (one for inside and one for outside), and support worker visits three times a week at my home.”

Janet’s support workers realised she would not manage easily with this level of support (especially as her family would be away over the upcoming holiday season) so twice-daily visits were arranged for the next eight days.

“Neighbours also supported me after the eight days by making my breakfast and generally tidying. My family is also amazing. My daughters-in-law were wonderful and do an awful lot for me. But I did want to maintain my independence,” Janet says.

“I persevered and did little jobs. When I



was tired I would rest. I was determined to get going. This slowly built my confidence, which increased each day.”

“Once I got myself on track, and with support and encouragement from my Access support workers, the rest was up to my own determination.”

Janet’s main goal was to walk to the local grocer, which she achieved with the help of her walking frame.

“I am ‘89 years young’ and continue to receive assistance with showering three times a week, as I am often unsteady on my feet. This wonderful service, still delivered by the same two support workers, sets me up for the day, and supports my independence at home.”

In Case of Emergency (ICE)

Now seems like an opportune time to remind everyone about ICE.

In any emergency, paramedics, police, and fire fighters are trained to check your cell phone address book if you cannot speak for yourself. They would call the ICE number (typically your next of kin) to identify you, and obtain relevant medical information. To create an ICE, just enter your contact person’s details in your mobile phone’s address book or contact list, and name the entry ICE. You can create alternatives such as ICE2 and ICE3 in case your main ICE contact is unavailable.