

Health Highlights



Well Wairarapa - better health for all

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Craig and Alix Cooper

"Planning while you are well and you can talk about it, that's the best advance gift you can possibly give the people you love"

Advance care planning

We don't know when accident, illness or injury might suddenly occur, leaving us incapable of making the very important decisions that matter.

Have you had the conversation that counts?

Many of us find thinking about our end of life difficult. This can mean we don't want to talk about it and don't put plans in place for the future. Advance care plans help to inform our care, which helps our families/whānau at the most difficult of times. Planning provides an opportunity for people to define what's important to them. It is a chance to say what treatment they would and would not want. It helps people, their families and their healthcare teams plan for the future and for their end of life care. A defined plan makes it much easier for families and healthcare providers to know what the person would want - particularly if they can no longer speak for themselves. It is kept safe on your medical file, to refer to when needed.

Why do an advanced care plan now?

You may not need it for many years, and you can change your wishes at any time, but having a plan prepared is particularly important if you become too unwell to tell your loved ones and health care team what you want yourself. Remember, accidents, injury and illness can happen suddenly.

An advance care plan is made by you, for you

It outlines what is important to you and gives your life meaning. This might include people and pets, your values, and the ways you would like those caring for you to look after your spiritual, cultural and emotional needs. It includes what treatments or types of care you would or wouldn't want, and who you'd want to make decisions on your behalf if you weren't able to. If there was a choice, your plan can advise how and where you'd like to spend your last days.

An advance care plan is an important gift for your loved ones as it can relieve the burden for them of having to make decisions on your behalf.

"Craig's planning was the kindest gift he could have given me. I really recommend everyone has those conversations."

Read in this edition of Wairarapa News how Craig Cooper's careful planning helped his wife, Alix, at the time of his death from cancer.

There are lots of free resources to help you think about and prepare your advance care plan at www.advancereplanning.org.nz or you can contact your local medical centre for more information.



Are you at risk of falling?

This year, one in three people aged over 65 and one in two over 80 will have a fall.

Falls are the leading cause of injuries to older people and the likelihood of falling increases with advancing age. Underlying conditions or problems with balance, strength or mobility increase the risk of falling for older people.

By using ask, assess, act you can identify older people at risk of falling and keep them safe.

Ask, assess, act is a conversation-based process which identifies falls-related problems and risks that are real for the older person. It involves the older person, their family/whānau and their carers, and can lead to shared decisions about actions which will be most manageable.

ask

Many older people that have fallen don't talk about it

1. Have you tripped or fallen in the last year?
2. Can you get out of a chair without using your hands?
3. Have you avoided doing anything because you are afraid you might lose your balance?

If you are not getting all the answers regarding what you see is happening, use gentle prompts.

assess

Check with the older person about what they see as problems and risks.

Assess falls risk factors related to:

- Balance, strength and gait
- Mobility
- Muscle strength
- Feet and shoes
- Medicines
- Dizziness & vision
- Cognition
- Continence
- Home safety
- Other health issues

act ...

Talk with older person about what they think will be most helpful.

Seek specialist input as needed - speak to your GP or nurse about the right steps to take.

Using ask, assess, act you can identify if your loved one is at risk of falling and you can help keep them safe.

Statistics show falls are the cause of half of all ACC claims and costs in people aged 65 years and over

When the weather turns and the footing gets slippery, take care out there and remember - safety first! Here are some simple tips to help you and the people you care about stay free from falls:

- 1 Improve your balance and strength**
Ask your doctor or nurse to recommend a programme or exercises that are right for you
- 2 Check your medication**
Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist to review your medicines

- 3 Watch your eyesight**
Get annual check ups and update your glasses

- 4 Make your home safer by:**
Removing clutter and tripping hazards, including mats and rugs;
Putting rails on stairs and adding grab-bars in bathroom and toilet areas;
Have good lighting in the house, especially on stairs.