**Continence NZ is marking 25 years of providing support to the more than 1.1 million New Zealanders who live with bladder and bowel incontinence, by reminding affected Kiwis they don’t have to be embarrassed or suffer in silence.**

September 24-October 1 is Continence NZ’s Awareness Week. Incredibly, bladder and/or bowel control problems affect more than 1.1 million New Zealanders over the age of 15, including 25 percent of younger women, 34 percent of older women and 22 percent of older men.

The impact on the physical and emotional health of people with incontinence issues can be significant and devastating, and is sadly often underestimated. Living with incontinence can feel humiliating, but Continence NZ is here to help.

Continence NZ was established 25 years ago to provide a service to incontinence sufferers, caregivers, health professionals and the general public by providing information and education on incontinence. It’s developed a service in an area that has largely been ignored in the past by health professionals and health care providers, as the result of a lack of funding.

From small beginnings with an annual public awareness campaign, it’s developed into an effective organisation that promotes continence awareness year round, allows the general public to access professional help and provides education. This is complemented by a national toll free helpline and website, www.continence.org.nz, where people can email in individual questions that are answered by specialised health professionals.

The helpline and website field questions from people from all walks of life, from parents worried that their child is still bed-wetting, to new mums needing support with their pelvic floor, or men who have recently undergone surgery for prostate cancer.

Continence NZ’s CEO, Louise Judd, believes the organisation’s 25th Anniversary is a great opportunity to remind New Zealanders that they don’t have to suffer in silence, and there is no shame in seeking support.

As she explains, “we constantly have people calling the 0800 number who desperately need support but are initially incredibly embarrassed, until they realise that they are not alone, as over 25 percent of the population also have continence issues. We will all either need support ourselves at some stage, or be supporting someone who does.

“The important thing is that people get over their initial embarrassment and seek help. We frequently hear how much of a relief receiving advice and support is for people, and picking up the phone or making an enquiry on our website is often life changing. We want to make sure that people don’t suffer a minute longer than they need to when help is available”.

Continence NZ is grateful to have been helping Kiwis for 25 years, and the generous support of Lotteries, The Ministry of Health, and USL Medical ensures that it can continue to provide its essential service to the 1.1 million Kiwis currently living with some form of incontinence.

It wants anyone worried about their own continence and wellbeing to know that they are not alone, and can call one of their friendly team at 0800 650 659 for a confidential chat and advice, or visit the website, as more than 120,000 people do each year.

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