

MEDIA RELEASE

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Continence NZ urges Kiwis to have a ‘wee chat’

Continence Awareness Week runs from 17-23 June

Incontinence isn't the usual topic of conversation, but this week Continence NZ is encouraging Kiwis to get together and have a 'wee chat'.

One in four Kiwis live with some bladder or bowel incontinence – that's over 1.1 million New Zealanders. Urinary incontinence affects 590,000 New Zealanders.

Bladder control problems are also common in mothers – one in three women have suffered urinary incontinence after having a baby.

This Continence Awareness Week, Auckland mother and grandmother, Emma Cherrington (48) is speaking out about her own incontinence journey to encourage others to overcome the taboo and have a 'wee chat' of their own.

Emma spent two decades living with incontinence and received several misdiagnoses before she found out the real problem.

Emma first noticed she had an issue when she returned to indoor netball two months after her son was born. She recalls she came off the court just an absolute mess after wetting herself through the game. "I was really, really embarrassed".

"I didn't talk to anybody about it at first, not even my mum," says Emma.

When she eventually sought medical help, she was told it was a result of a weak core, and later, her weight. It wasn't until recently, more than 20 years after having her son, Emma found out she has a pelvic support structure issue. The turning point for her was attending a community continence talk put on by Waitemata DHB.

"Women like to talk and have conversations with our girlfriends but sometimes personal issues like this are too hard to talk about and you can feel very isolated," Emma explains.

"However, when you're sitting a room full of women who have exactly the same issue that you do – and some have suffered far more than you have – it puts things into perspective."

Emma's among 1 million New Zealanders living with incontinence. Many are just doing their best to get on with everyday life and are too afraid or embarrassed to ask for help.

Emma encourages those suffering in silence to get quality help and support.

"You deserve to live a full life. If a bladder issue is stopping you, then get it sorted. Don't miss out on the things you enjoy because of this issue. Don't be embarrassed and don't let the shame of the issue get the better of you."

This Continence Awareness Week (17-23 June), Continence NZ is encouraging New Zealanders from all walks of life to break through the taboo and 'have a wee chat'.

“Kiwis could have a wee chat with a family member, a friend, a GP, a physio, a carer, by attending a continence talk, or they could simply start by calling our helpline on 0800 650 659 which operates from Monday to Friday,” says Continence NZ CEO, Louise Judd.

Expert continence nurse Janet Thackray is available on the helpline on Mondays and Tuesdays and has helped changed the lives of countless Kiwis living with this health problem.

“Anyone with a concern, no matter how big or small, shouldn’t hesitate to get in touch.”

To hear more about Emma’s story click [here](#).

ENDS

For more information or to request an interview please contact:

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Freephone helpline: 0800 650 659

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You can support Continence NZ by making a donation at www.continence.org.nz

ABOUT CONTINENCE NZ

Continence NZ was established in 1986 to provide a service to people with continence problems, caregivers, health professionals and the general public by providing information and education on continence topics. Continence NZ has developed a service in an area that has largely been ignored in the past by health professionals and health providers. The sufferers have been too embarrassed or unable to access appropriate help and in a majority of cases, suffered in silence. Continence NZ promotes awareness of continence problems and provides access to professional help.