

Dr Tom tours Hutt Valley

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Dr Tom Mulholland is an emergency department doctor gone mobile.

Currently touring Aotearoa in a retro Chevy V8 ambulance, Dr Tom and his team are running community pre-diabetes and heart checks around the country.

Healthy Families Lower Hutt caught up with him when he was out and about in the Hutt Valley.

I hear you're a Hutt Boy?

That's right. I now live in Auckland, but I grew up in Stokes Valley and it was great to be back there this week doing community testing at New World.

Left: Dr Tom and Tanya Radford, health promotion team leader from Te Awakairangi Health Network, Stokes Valley.

How did the testing go? Did you have any common themes?

We did have a lot of people test positively for pre-diabetes and high blood pressure, which isn't uncommon.

What is the single best thing people can do for their health?

Stop smoking. This can be difficult, and there are a lot of different reasons why people feel they can't give it up – anxiety, stress or the worry that they'll be horrible to their co-workers if they did (I actually hear that a lot).

But a lot of what I see in the emergency room is preventable.

Type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease are

'lifestyle' diseases, and you can do a lot to avoid getting them. For instance?

Reducing your sugar and salt intake will make a big difference, along with quitting smoking and doing some physical activity.

What else would you recommend?

Don't wait until you're unwell before going to see your doctor.

Go in for general health checks too and get your cholesterol and blood pressure numbers, especially if you have a family history of diabetes or heart disease.

For help to quit smoking phone Quitline 0800 778 778. You can also check out www.drtonamission.com or visit the Healthy Families Lower Hutt website or Facebook page.

New guide to living with autism

A new guide aims to help local families supporting children and young people living with autism.

The Guide to Living with Autism Spectrum Disorder –birth to 19 years has been developed for families in Hutt Valley and Wairarapa.

It has information about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) that will help families decide what steps to take if they think their child has ASD. For families of children with ASD, it provides local solutions, practical advice and lists all the local support services available.

Heather Drysdale, from Hutt Valley DHB's child development service, says in the last four years she has visited over 250 families in the Hutt Valley where a child has ASD.

She says not everyone living with autism needs intensive support from

health, education or social services but they still need a level of support with daily challenges, including knowing where to go for help if issues arise.

"Autism Spectrum Disorder is truly a wide spectrum of different skills and abilities. Children will have social communication difficulties and be less flexible in thinking compared to other children their same age. Some children may be slower to develop language, some children may not develop a verbal language system and some children might have wonderful language structures and vocabulary, but still have difficulty with social interaction."

Staff in child development services at Hutt Valley DHB and Focus Wairarapa DHB spent a year developing the guide with input from many



different agencies including the paediatrics department and Infant, Child, and Family Services (ICAFS), Ministry of Education, Autism New Zealand, Altogether Autism, Autism Wairarapa Charitable Trust and parents from

Wairarapa and Hutt Valley.

"While there is information available, we wanted to have a single document for families in our area to refer to.

This is the first time we have had all the local contacts and support services listed in one

easy-to-read document." The guide will be regularly updated.

***The Guide to Living with Autism Spectrum Disorder –birth to 19 years* can be downloaded for free from: huttvalleydhb.org.nz**



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