

# Whoosh

March 2010

Issue 13.1



Official Quarterly Newsletter of  
**ASTHMA CANTERBURY**

## Welcome to our March newsletter!

Happy New Year to all our readers, we hope everyone has had a good break. We hope you enjoy our latest newsletter. If you have any questions please contact us via any of the options below.

Ph 03 3665235 Fax 03 3665209  
Email [office@asthmacanty.org.nz](mailto:office@asthmacanty.org.nz)  
[www.asthmacanty.org.nz](http://www.asthmacanty.org.nz)

*Belinda, Jack, Marilyn, Mary, Moira, Ryanne  
& Teresa*

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## Entertainment Books for sale

Asthma Canterbury will be selling the ever popular Entertainment Books again this year. These books offer great discounts on dining, takeaways and entertainment.

Be in quick! The price is \$65 per book. We would really appreciate your support! \$13 from the sale of each book goes to Asthma Canterbury

You can pay by cheque to Asthma Canterbury or by credit card. Place your order by emailing us at [office@asthmacanty.org.nz](mailto:office@asthmacanty.org.nz) or phone 3665235.

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## Thank You

The Canterbury Asthma Society wishes to thank its volunteers, members and donors for their ongoing support – without which we could not provide our current range of services. Your assistance is very much appreciated.



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## INCREASED RISK OF OSTEOPOROSIS FROM CORTICOSTEROID USE

(thanks to Garth Streat, Osteoporosis Society Canterbury Inc)

If you take corticosteroid medication to help control asthma or COPD you could be at greater risk from developing osteoporosis.

### What is osteoporosis?

The word osteoporosis means porous bones. It is a condition in which the bones in our skeleton become thin and brittle and fracture easily. Osteoporosis affects more women than men and can be very debilitating – here in New Zealand over half of women and a third of men over the age of 60 will suffer a fracture due to osteoporosis. Osteoporosis can also occur in much younger people and this is where the corticosteroids come in. Steroids taken orally or intravenously, ie *Prednisone*, *Hydrocortisone* pose a greater risk as they are taken systemically ie, they are absorbed into the blood stream. These inhaled medications - *Becloforte*, *Beclomethasone*, *Becotide*, *Flixotide*, *Pulmicort* *Respocort* - all contain corticosteroids, however the risk is much lower as the steroid is delivered in very small amounts and only to the lungs.

### How do corticosteroids cause bone loss?

Bone is a living tissue which is constantly being renewed throughout our life. Osteoporosis develops when the amount of bone added is less than the amount of bone lost. Calcium plays a vital part in the bone-building process – 99% of the calcium in your body is in your skeleton and, as our bodies do not manufacture calcium we must include adequate quantities in our diet every day.

***What corticosteroids do is that they inhibit the absorption of calcium necessary for healthy bone turnover, and***

this starts happening almost from the moment a person starts taking corticosteroid medication.

But that is not all!

There are other risk factors associated with osteoporosis. Check out these other risk factors:

- Family history of fractures, especially where parents or grandparents break a wrist, a hip, or fracture their spine, causing them to lose height as they get older.
- In women reaching menopause early (before 45 years old) and/or having irregular or infrequent menstrual periods.
- Caucasian (white skinned) or Asian people are more at risk
- Low calcium diet, low dairy product intake
- Heavy smoking
- Excessive alcohol intake
- Immobility or lack of exercise

If you have asthma, or COPD, taking corticosteroid medication, and are in any of the above risk categories you are more at risk of developing osteoporosis.

### What should you do?

Keep taking your corticosteroid medication as prescribed but talk to your doctor if you have any concerns regarding Osteoporosis, particularly if you have any of the other risk factors mentioned above.

### To establish and maintain good bone health your lifestyle should include:

- A calcium-rich diet, taking calcium supplements if necessary
- Regular weight-bearing exercise like walking, jogging, tennis, golf, dancing and low impact aerobics
- Daily exposure outdoors in the sunlight if possible, supplemented by a regular

vitamin D tablet (Calciferol) to ensure an adequate intake of vitamin D which is important for the absorption of calcium

- No smoking
- Limited alcohol intake

#### **How do I find out if I have osteoporosis?**

Today the most accurate and reliable way to check low bone density/osteoporosis is by a bone scan machine called a Dual Energy X-ray Absorptionmeter (DEXA). The machine uses x-rays to measure bone density, but the dose is extremely low, about 1/50 of a chest x-ray. Bone scans can be arranged either through the public health system or privately, through your GP. In Christchurch St Georges Hospital and Princess Margaret Hospital both have bone-scanning facilities.

#### **If I have low bone density or osteoporosis, what then?**

Visit your General Practitioner for advice. He/she may prescribe a calcium supplement called Fosamax or Etidronate, and vitamin D. Both Fosamax and Etidronate have proved effective in reducing the risk of fracture. You may also be advised to make some lifestyle changes (as described above).

For more information on osteoporosis and bone health, contact the Osteoporosis Society Canterbury at PO Box 21021 Christchurch, or phone the chairperson Trish Adams at 03 960 5143.

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### **New Manager at Asthma Canterbury**

Chris Summerfield, who had been the manager at Asthma Canterbury since April 2008, resigned from her position in December. Thank you Chris for all your work and we wish you well for your future endeavours.

I would like to introduce myself, my name is Teresa Chalecki and I commenced as the new manager in January. I have a background in nursing and health management, both in Canterbury and on the West Coast. I am very appreciative of the opportunity to join the Asthma Canterbury team and look forward to continuing the excellent work done by the organisation.

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### **ONE MAN, ONE ROAD, ONE CYCLE**

Roger Honeybun is cycling more than 1,000 kilometres from Christchurch to Auckland to raise awareness of poor asthma control in New Zealand. Roger's great nephew, Sean Hedley, tragically died from an exacerbation of asthma at just nine years old.

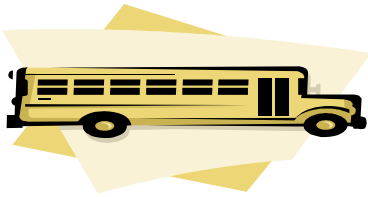
The One Man One Road One Cycle awareness campaign will take place from 13 -21 March and Roger will travel 1000 km's along State Highway 1 over 9 days to raise awareness about asthma control and to help raise funds for Asthma New Zealand.



As part of the One Man One Road One Cycle Asthma Control campaign, Asthma New Zealand is running a TXT campaign until May 30 where people can make a \$3 donation by texting "ASTHMA" to 4711 or donations can be made on-site along Roger's cycle route or by making a donation online at [www.asthma-nz.org.nz](http://www.asthma-nz.org.nz).

The online asthma control test can be undertaken at [www.asthmacontrol.co.nz](http://www.asthmacontrol.co.nz). Roger and Asthma New Zealand has also set up a Facebook page outlining his journey "One Man One Road One Cycle".

### Mobile Asthma Clinic to visit Christchurch



Asthma New Zealand and the ANZ Mobile Asthma Clinic will be in Christchurch on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> March at Bunnings Tower Junction store between 10 and 2pm. The purpose of the visit is to provide advice and information for asthma sufferers and their family and friends. Asthma Canterbury staff will also be in attendance to arrange ongoing support if needed. We would love to see you there.

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### Correct use of medication reduces the risk of hospital admissions

A recent study in Northern Ireland found that 35% of a group of 182 people with hard to control asthma collected less than half the medication prescribed for them by their doctor. This could indicate that doctors may be under the impression that patients are receiving appropriate medication when this may not be the case at all!

Here at Asthma Canterbury, we find that many people do not use their preventer inhalers as often as they should. Often this is due to a lack of understanding regarding the role a medication plays in controlling symptoms or a fear of it's side effects.

(Preventer inhalers are generally in the autumn colours of brown or orange). Regular use of preventer medication leads to better control. Education regarding what is happening in the body during an asthma episode and how different medications work has been found to be the most effective way of getting people to successfully self manage their asthma and avoid acute flare ups.

If you feel you would like to know more about your asthma medications and how they work, contact us now for a free consultation.

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### A timely reminder



For those of you who only take preventer medications over the cooler months of the year, now is a good time to be thinking about visiting your doctor for a review and to pick up a new script for your preventer inhalers. As the weather is proving to be a bit temperamental, it pays to be well prepared. Don't wait for symptoms to appear before you decide to start taking your preventer.

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### Don't let the flu get you....

As summer draws to a close it is time to start thinking about getting your annual influenza vaccine. This year the vaccination programme is beginning in early March and will provide protection against three strains of influenza including the H1N1 influenza strain commonly known as swine flu.



H1N1 influenza is predicted to be the dominant strain in NZ this influenza season. It is described as a mild to moderate illness with most people affected recovering at home. For people with pre-existing conditions 'the flu' can have a bigger impact. Fortunately people 6 months and older with chronic respiratory conditions including asthma, if prescribed regular preventive therapy, are eligible for free vaccination. People over the age of 65 are also eligible. If you had pandemic influenza H1N1 in 2009 you can still safely receive the vaccination.

Influenza virus affects the nose, throat and lungs. The illness comes on suddenly with a fever or chills, sore throat, dry cough, headaches, fatigue and body aches or pains. It is transferred through droplets of moisture from breathing, coughing or sneezing. It can also be transferred through hands touching droplets infected with the virus and then touching the mouth or nose. Washing and drying hands thoroughly is a good habit!

Remember anyone can catch 'the flu', it doesn't matter how fit and healthy you are. Early vaccination provides early protection. See your Doctor or Practice Nurse to discuss and arrange your influenza vaccination.

[www.moh.govt.nz](http://www.moh.govt.nz) [www.influenza.org.nz](http://www.influenza.org.nz)

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**The Canterbury Asthma Society wishes to extend its condolences to the families of members and friends who have recently lost loved ones. Our thoughts also go to any members unwell at this time.**

## **Asthma Awareness (Balloon) Day Friday 7<sup>th</sup> May**

Friday 7<sup>th</sup> May is Asthma Awareness Day. This is celebrated by New Zealand Asthma Societies as Balloon Day as one in four children have asthma and would find it difficult to blow up a balloon.

Asthma Canterbury Nurses will be at Eastgate Mall on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 10am-2pm and at The Palms in Shirley on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> May from 10am-2pm. They will be available to answer your questions, provide information and advice on Asthma (and balloons). They would love to see you there.

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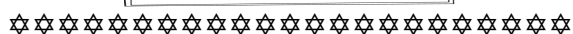
## **Home Energy Advice Centre Making a Real Difference**

Living in a warm dry house is especially important for people who have a respiratory condition, but many struggle to balance this need with the costs associated with keeping warm. The Canterbury Home Energy Advice Centre (HEAC) provides a free and impartial telephone advice service which can help callers do just that.

Staying warm affordably involves getting the right balance between making sure your home is energy efficient (and accessing financial assistance to do so), sensible energy use behaviours, appropriate heating, and matching the right energy plan with your day to day needs.

Contact the HEAC by calling 0800 355 588 from Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm,

email [canterbury@energyadvice.org.nz](mailto:canterbury@energyadvice.org.nz), or  
visit [www.energyadvice.org.nz](http://www.energyadvice.org.nz)



**! ASTHMA !**

**Does it take your breath away?**



**Canterbury**

District Health Board

**The Canterbury Respiratory Research Group is looking for volunteers to take part in a clinical study for a new medicine that is being developed to treat asthma**

If you have ASTHMA and are:

- Aged 18 -75
- In generally good health
- A non-smoker or ex-smoker

**They would like to hear from you**

**Your travel expenses will be reimbursed**

**This study has been approved by the  
Multi Region Ethics Committee  
Canterbury Respiratory  
Research Group  
364-1157**

## About us...

### Contact Details:

Canterbury Asthma Society  
275 Cashel Street  
PO Box 13 091  
Christchurch 8141  
Ph (03) 366 5235  
Fax (03) 366 5209  
Email [office@asthmacanty.org.nz](mailto:office@asthmacanty.org.nz)  
[www.asthmacanty.org.nz](http://www.asthmacanty.org.nz)

### Office hours:

8:30am - 4pm, Monday to Friday – As we are often in a consultation or doing home visits we recommend you give us a ring first to ensure we are available to assist.

### Staff members:

Moira Green	Respiratory Educator
Belinda O'Rourke	Respiratory Educator
Teresa Chalecki	Manager
Mary Wells	Nebuliser Coordinator
Jack Welsh	Volunteer
Marilyn Bryce	Volunteer
Ryanne Firme	Volunteer

### HOW WE CAN HELP:

- The Canterbury Asthma Society can help in the following ways:
- **We Provide:**
  - Education sessions for individuals, community and professional groups including schools
  - Pre-school Baxter Bear programme
  - Smoking cessation assistance and nicotine replacement therapy.
- **We Sell:**
  - Allergy Bedding covers
  - Nebulisers
  - Nebuliser filters & giving sets
- **We Hire:**
  - Nebulisers (for short term hire only)