

# NORTHERN HEALTH HOME CARE PACKAGES

## NEWSLETTER

**MAY 2018**

Hello everyone and welcome to our first Newsletter for 2018. I trust you all had a lovely Summer and managed to avoid the heat.

### **NH HCP Staff:**

Due to welcomed growth and demand for our Home Care Packages we are currently finalising recruitment of 3 new Case Managers. Our program has grown by a massive 50% in the last 12 months. This is great news as it means many more people are receiving Home Care Packages and getting the support they require to remain living at home.

I would like to thank all our staff for their hard work and increased demands during this time.

### **Consumer survey:**

We are always looking to improve our programs. One important way we can get feedback on what we are doing well and where we can improve, is to conduct a survey of those who use our service. We have included the survey with this newsletter and I strongly encourage you to complete this and send back to us in the reply paid envelope supplied. All responses will be anonymous and your feedback will be invaluable.

### **Influenza season and vaccination:**

Influenza affects people of all ages, but infections among people over 65 years old are more likely to require hospitalisation and cause serious complications such as pneumonia and heart attacks. Of the 1,100 deaths from influenza related conditions recorded in Australia last year, 90% were aged 65 and over.



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Recent studies have shown that traditional flu vaccines don't protect older people very well against flu and its complications, as older persons immune systems don't respond as well to vaccines.

That is why this year people aged 65 years and older are being provided with two **free** new enhanced vaccines.

Compared to the standard flu vaccine, these vaccines have been shown to better stimulate the immune system of older people to make protective antibodies. These vaccines are only available for use in people 65 years of age or older and are not available on the private market. What vaccine you'll receive will depend on what's recommended and available at your GP or pharmacy.

These vaccines will be available from April 2018 and we strongly encourage you to speak to your Doctor about which vaccination is best for you.

**Remember the vaccination is free of charge to anyone over 65 years old** (however you may need to pay for the doctors visit as usual).

**Did you know:** Northern Health encourages all staff to have the yearly flu vaccine (at no cost). This helps to minimise the spread of influenza and also assist in protecting you!.

**If you have any questions, speak to your doctor, or Case Manager.**

## Shingles added to free vaccine list:

THE shingles vaccine is now free for 70-year-olds.

Shingles is a painful rash, which can blister and is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. It is a serious infection that has a particularly debilitating effect on older people. One in three adults are at risk of developing the virus in their lifetime.

The shingles vaccine is the first adult vaccine for a new disease added to the National Immunisation Program since 2005.

A catch-up program is available for adults aged 71 to 79 years.

We strongly encourage you to speak to your Doctor about this vaccination.

**Remember the vaccination is free of charge to anyone 70-79 years old** (however you may need to pay for the doctors visit as usual).

**If you have any questions, speak to your doctor, or Case Manager.**



## Medical Treatment Planning and Decisions Act

On 12 March 2018 the *Medical Treatment Planning and Decisions Act 2016* commenced. These changes affect all adults living in Victoria.

The new laws include the following changes:

- Changing the process by which someone can be appointed to make decisions about your medical treatment (if/when you are unable to).
- Allows someone to make “Advance Care Directives”, where you can lay down instructions, preferences or values that a decision maker must take into account regarding medical matters.
- Give more control to you to be able to determine how future decisions about your medical treatment are to be made when/if you are unable to make them.

These changes have affected Enduring Powers of Attorney for Financial or personal decisions.

**Any existing Powers of Attorney are still valid and do not need to be changed unless you want to.**

This is something we should all think about and consider at any age, but becomes more important as we get older.

Making these decisions does not take any control away from you. They only become “active”, if you are unable to speak for yourself. Such occasions may include following a stroke, being unconscious, or developing Dementia. They are **not** able to be used while you can still make decisions for yourself.

The ability to make a specific decision at the time when the decision needs to be made is called decision-making capacity. Generally, this means you are able to make a decision if you can:

- understand the facts and choices involved
- remember the information and weigh up the consequences
- communicate the decision in some way.

The law presumes that you have decision-making capacity unless there is something that suggests you do not. An assessment of your capacity to make a decision is not based on your appearance, your age or the fact that you have made a decision that others think is unwise.

We all have the right to make our own decisions. However, there may be a time when you are unable to make decisions for yourself and need someone else to make particular decisions for you.

## Where to start

A good place to start planning ahead is to talk to those close to you about your wishes and what is important to you. Having these conversations early means that you can:

- consider things carefully while you are well and not under pressure
- seek advice if you need it
- make sure that the people close to you know what you want to happen in the future, if you are unable to decide for yourself.

You can also make an **“Advanced Care Directive”** which is a document that sets out legally binding instructions about any future medical treatment that you want or refuse. It can also document your values and preferences which need to be taken into account by any medical treatment decision maker, on your behalf.

You may also consider **“Enduring Power of Attorney”** for Financial or personal matters..

Your Case Manager can assist you with the necessary documents and information to allow you to make a plan that best suits you.

More information can be found at [www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au](http://www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au)

## Carer Health and Wellbeing Coaching Workshops.

If you are a carer, you know what a difficult but rewarding role this can be. Many people would not be able to remain at home without the support of their “carers”. Carers can be husbands, wives, sons, daughters, grandchildren, friends etc.

When in the “carer” role some people find that they may neglect their own health and wellbeing due to the demands of being a carer.

Please see the attached flyer regarding the “Carer Health and Wellbeing Workshops” offered by Merri Health. Some of our current carers are attending this program and highly recommend it.

You can contact them directly, or ask your Case Manager if you need some help.

Transport and respite can also be arranged if required.

Regards,

Julie Williams and the HCP Team

