



A JOURNEY TO BETTER HEALTH

Stroke can happen at any time – and for a stroke survivor and their family, it can completely devastate their day-to-day lives. Geoff, a quarry driver from Dunedin, experienced a stroke six years ago. With the support of the Stroke Foundation, we're proud to say that Geoff is now back at work and is continuing on his journey to better health.

The day before his stroke, Geoff was experiencing some strange sensations. He was extremely tired, headachy, and thirsty.

Geoff recalled, "It had been pretty warm here in Dunedin, so I just put it all down to heat exhaustion. But honestly, my lifestyle wasn't that great. I didn't watch my diet or exercise and that had taken a toll on my health."

When Geoff walked into work the next day, he suddenly felt like he had been whacked from behind. "I knew something was wrong. By coincidence, my colleague's mother had experienced a stroke a few weeks earlier and knew to dial 111."

Geoff was immediately admitted to the stroke ward and underwent rehabilitation before returning home to continue his recovery. It was a period of major change for Geoff. Physically, he'd lost a lot of strength on his left side, and his speech was also affected.

"It was all a shock, I thought I was too young to have a

stroke at 51. I wasn't able to get back to work and I had my driver's license revoked for six weeks."

Kathy, one of the Stroke Foundation's Community Stroke Advisors (CSAs), was introduced to Geoff to guide him through his recovery and connect him with the vital support systems that would make a difference. Kathy was there to help when Geoff returned home, supporting him through those first stages and liaising with rehabilitation services to make this transition easier for Geoff and his family.

"Kathy helped me through the immense changes and challenges I was going through. Whenever I needed something, she was there to help."

When Geoff regained some of his confidence, he also joined Kathy's coffee group for stroke survivors.

"The support and camaraderie from the group has been fantastic. I was encouraged to join a walking group, which is something I've continued. It's really built up my stamina and strength."

...story continues inside...

After a couple of months, Geoff thought he'd achieved his major goal of getting back to work as he was given the all-clear to drive again. However, recovery from stroke is often an unpredictable process. A specialist noted that Geoff was experiencing visual inattention, which meant that his driver's license was once again revoked.

"I was really worried about how long it would be before I could return to work, or if I could get back to work at all."

From that point on, Geoff focused on what he could control, which was improving his overall health and fitness. He started regularly going to the gym with his wife Fiona and taking part in long-distance walking events.

"I set a goal to join a walk from Clyde to Alexandra in the September following my stroke, which I completed. Since then, I've actually taken part in around 10 long-distance 10km walks. I love them!"

After driving for over 30 years, Geoff didn't expect to have to start from scratch. However, the massive improvements Geoff was making to his health meant he was getting closer to passing his driving tests and returning

to work. Just over a year after his stroke, he was back at work full-time.

"Over the last six years I've completely turned my health and lifestyle around, I've even managed to lose 30kgs!"

Geoff remains a regular in the coffee group and enjoys encouraging stroke survivors on their recovery journeys. "I support others by sharing my own experiences. It's good to be there to help – just like the Stroke Foundation, and particularly Kathy, did for me."

Geoff is now training to complete the Papatowai Challenge in February, where he will walk a 15.5km course around the Catlins.

SUPPORTING US NOW WILL ALLOW US TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF CSAS IN OUR COMMUNITIES, HELPING EVEN MORE PEOPLE AFFECTED BY STROKE IN 2021.

MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO



It's with a heavy heart that I share news of my retirement as CEO and will be departing the Stroke Foundation at the end of May. With grandchildren in Christchurch, the time has come for me to make the move from Wellington to be closer to them.

For the last 15 years as CEO, I have seen a lot of amazing change in our organisation. The Stroke Foundation was previously split into five regional societies. Working to unite our efforts to fight stroke and empower stroke survivors and their families, the regions amalgamated in 2013 into one single body.

We established a Health Promotion team to prevent stroke and introduced the F.A.S.T. campaign to New Zealand.

We've significantly grown our teams of skilled Community Stroke Advisors and introduced our successful Return to Work service. Our teams are making a huge difference for thousands of people on their journey through life after stroke, as well as helping people to reduce their risk of stroke altogether. It's thanks to your support that all this has been possible.

I want to thank you all for your support over the years and encourage you to continue being part of the Stroke Foundation's journey. Due to your generosity we have grown our services and impacted the lives of so many, and there's so much more we could achieve with your ongoing support.

The board is already working on the appointment of a new CEO who will help us to continue to take positive action in leading the fight against stroke.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Vivian', written over a white background.

Mark Vivian
Chief Executive Officer

OUR TOP EXERCISE TIPS FOR 2021

It was after his stroke that Geoff (from our lead story) turned his health around. He lost 30kgs by regularly going to the gym, setting personal walking goals, and eating healthier. By prioritising his health, he has dramatically reduced his risk of stroke.

This year, we can all reduce our risk of stroke. In fact, **doing just 30 minutes of moderate exercise five days a week can halve your risk** – not to mention bring general improvements to your heart health, quality of sleep, and mental wellbeing.

HERE ARE SOME OF OUR TOP EXERCISE TIPS TO HELP KEEP YOU AND YOUR LOVED ONES SAFE THIS YEAR.

- Stay active, schedule exercise at the time of day when you usually feel most alert.
- Find the exercises that you enjoy most, whether it's going to the gym, dancing, walking, cycling, or swimming – you could try something new!
- 'Moderate exercise' means doing enough to make you feel slightly warm and a little out of breath – you could do gardening, jobs around the house, or simply avoid the elevator and take the stairs.
- Find motivation by setting yourself a personal goal.
- Find an exercise partner, perhaps a friend or family member, or join a group – many people find this makes an activity more enjoyable.
- Make sure you stay hydrated before and after exercising.
- Keep going – it will be hard at first, but it will get easier!



OUR BIG BLOOD PRESSURE CHECK ROAD TRIP

It's predicted that every year over **11,000 New Zealanders will experience a stroke** – that's one person **every 45 minutes**. We continue to strengthen our stroke prevention efforts to reduce this number.

On World Stroke Day in October, we launched our Big Blood Pressure Check Road Trip. Offering free blood pressure checks, our Big Blood Pressure Check Vans are on the road, visiting all 59 PAK'nSAVE and select New World supermarkets across the country until June 2021.

The road trip is one way we responded to the challenges associated with COVID-19. Most activity had previously concentrated on the first Saturday in October, but we had concerns about operating the campaign in this way in light of the pandemic. Our road trip model allows us to offer free checks in a safer environment, so we can continue to reach those who need us most.

High blood pressure is the number one modifiable risk factor for stroke, and it affects around one in five New Zealanders. Usually, there are no symptoms – the only way to know you have high blood pressure is to get tested.

LOOK OUT FOR US AT YOUR LOCAL PAK'nSAVE OR NEW WORLD SUPERMARKET. TO FIND OUT WHEN THE VAN WILL BE NEAR YOU, VISIT [STROKE.ORG.NZ](https://stroke.org.nz)

AN AMAZING STROKE CHAMPION

Events, such as the Auckland Marathon, are a great way to raise awareness and vital funds to support and empower stroke survivors.

It's particularly moving to see stroke survivors take part in such physically demanding events, as many have had to relearn to walk and talk, as well as rebuild their strength and self-confidence.

Jessica is an inspirational stroke survivor who is passionate about supporting others. Three years ago, she was a typical 28-year-old enjoying life and planning for her future with her partner Jamie, when the first of three strokes struck out of the blue.

In November, Jessica tackled the 5km event at the Auckland Marathon, alongside an enthusiastic group



of stroke survivors from the Stroke Foundation's coffee group in Auckland. This was a great way to boost the public's understanding of a condition that most people associate with old age, and also to raise much-needed funds to support the Stroke Foundation's services and awareness campaigns.

"I've received incredible support from the Stroke Foundation, so this is something I can do for an amazing organisation that is very close to my heart," Jessica shared.

We're so grateful to Jessica for her support of the Stroke Foundation, and for getting the word out about younger people and stroke. We'd also like to extend our thanks to all of our Stroke Champions, and everyone who donates!

JESSICA AND OTHER STROKE CHAMPIONS RAISED AN AMAZING \$11,400 AT THE AUCKLAND MARATHON WHICH WILL SUPPORT OUR TEAM OF COMMUNITY STROKE ADVISORS ACROSS THE COUNTRY – THANK YOU!

BECOME A STROKE CHAMPION

The rate of stroke is significantly increasing in New Zealand, placing a huge demand on our vital services. That's why we need your help now more than ever.

Join us in 2021 to continue our efforts to raise vital funds and fight stroke in New Zealand!

Like Jessica, you too can help to make an incredible difference by joining our Stroke Champions team for Wellington or Auckland's Round the Bays 2021. Raise \$100 or more and get one of our awesome Stroke Champion t-shirts to wear on the day!

WELLINGTON ROUND THE BAYS – 21 FEBRUARY, 2021

Walk or run the 6.5km, 10km, or 21km distances available to support our Big Blood Pressure Check Van, which provides free blood pressure and atrial fibrillation checks in the lower North Island, as well as sharing

information about ways to reduce stroke risk.

Find out more or register at stroke.org.nz/wlgrtb21

AUCKLAND ROUND THE BAYS – 28 FEBRUARY, 2021

Walk or run to support the Stroke Foundation at New Zealand's largest fun run. Take on the 8.4km distance and raise funds for our 28 Community Stroke Advisors across New Zealand, who responded to over 5,500 stroke survivors in the last year.

Find out more or register at stroke.org.nz/auckland-rtb-2021

DO YOU CURRENTLY DONATE BY CHEQUE?

Are you aware that major banks will stop issuing and processing cheques soon?

Kiwibank, BNZ, and ANZ have already stopped issuing cheque books and will stop processing cheques altogether on **31 May 2021**. ASB and Westpac have indicated they will soon follow.

As a member of our supporter family, we truly value your support. Kiwis and their whānau who have been impacted by stroke need you to continue standing by them.

We want to help you find alternative ways to continue donating to us. If you would normally donate by cheque, and have concerns about how you will donate to us in the future, please don't hesitate to call us directly on **0800 78 76 53** or send us an email at **supportercare@stroke.org.nz**

We also have a list of options on our website at **stroke.org.nz/support-us**

WE CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH FOR THE WONDERFUL SUPPORT YOU HAVE SHOWN IN THE PAST AND ASK YOU TO PLEASE CONTINUE THAT SUPPORT. WITHOUT YOU, WE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO HELP ALL THOSE WHO WILL NEED US IN THE COMING YEAR.

OTHER WAYS TO DONATE

1 Call Us: We can take payment by credit card over the phone. Please be assured that your information is treated with the strictest levels of confidentiality, consistent with New Zealand privacy laws.

2 Online: You can donate through the Support Us page on our website.

3 Internet Banking: Set us up as a payee via internet banking:

- Please make sure you include your donor ID and name in the reference field.
- Our account number for direct payments is: **02 1269 0023111 01**
- Please get in touch with your bank directly if you need assistance.

4 Regular Giving: You can regularly donate each month via credit card. This is a secure, easy, and fast way to donate, and it is rapidly becoming a preference amongst our supporters. For more information go to our website or call us directly.

5 Direct Debit: You can also donate regularly by setting up a Direct Debit authority on your bank account. You can download a form from our website or give us a call and we can help you.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE END OF THE TAX YEAR

31 March 2021 is not far away, and with it comes the end of the tax year. This means that for any donation you make now, you'll be able to claim back your tax immediately, rather than wait a whole year! So, if you have donated:

\$50 you'll get back **\$16.60**

\$100 you'll get back **\$33**

\$300 you'll get back **\$100**

All donations over \$5 are eligible for a tax refund. Thank you for your ongoing support!



NEW RESOURCES TO EMPOWER SURVIVORS AND CARERS

Stroke has a significant impact on a person's physical, mental, social, and spiritual wellbeing – as well as that of their whānau. COVID-19, and the uncertainty it has brought, has only intensified these issues for those we work with.

As a result, we've seen an increased demand for our Community Stroke Advisor service, as stroke survivors and family carers need extra support to manage challenges faced throughout recovery.

One way we've responded has been to develop a set of new free resources, with the support of Te Hiringa Hauroa / Health Promotion Agency. These are aimed at meeting the individual psychosocial support needs of stroke survivors and their whānau, friends, and carers. Our resources focus on two of our crucial support areas, namely 'depression and anxiety' and 'carer wellbeing'.

If you or a loved one has experienced a stroke, you can access two 6-minute videos to help you on your journey after stroke. Hear from Stroke Foundation experts, stroke survivors and carers who share their experiences and advice. Accompanying these are downloadable guides.

Last year, we also held a series of seminars across the country as well as online webinars. We plan to hold more of these events this year, to continue supporting the wellbeing of stroke survivors and carers.

These seminars, webinars and videos provide tips and strategies to help everyone who has been affected by stroke feel supported and empowered.

To find out how you can join a seminar or webinar, as well as access the videos and resources, visit our website stroke.org.nz/stroke-events



DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY AFTER STROKE

Around half of all stroke survivors experience significant depression or anxiety in the first year following their stroke. It's also common to experience both at the same time. However, there are proven ways to start feeling better. Our resources will help you gain awareness about the causes and signs, as well as strategies and opportunities to help manage or treat these conditions.

CARER WELLBEING – LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

We know that carers are the unsung heroes of the health system, as it's usually an unpaid carer who carries out the long-term work of caring for their whānau member at home. Our resources provide carers with insights about common challenges they will face, strategies to build resilience and develop your relationship, information to build positive networks, and tips to manage your wellbeing.



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