

Cancer Kōrero

The more we talk about it,
The more we know about it



**Cancer
Society**

Te Kāhui Matepukupuku
o Aotearoa

August 2025



WHAKATAUKĪ

**He aha te mea nui o te ao
He tangata, he tangata,
he tangata**

**What is the most important
thing in the world?
It is people, it is people,
it is people.**

Through being well informed about cancer we have a head start on knowing the truth. We can then be prepared to care for our own tinana (body), but also tautoko (support) whānau (family) or friends going through it.

Thank you to the Nelson Marlborough District Health Board for giving permission to adapt their Cancer Kōrero booklet (April 2017).

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HE AHA TE MATEPUKUPUKU?

What is cancer?

Normal body cells grow and divide, but they know when to stop growing and they die and get replaced. Cancer cells don't know when to stop growing, divide out of control and don't die when they're supposed to. Cancer is when cells that are not normal grow and spread very fast, which results in a malignant tumour forming.

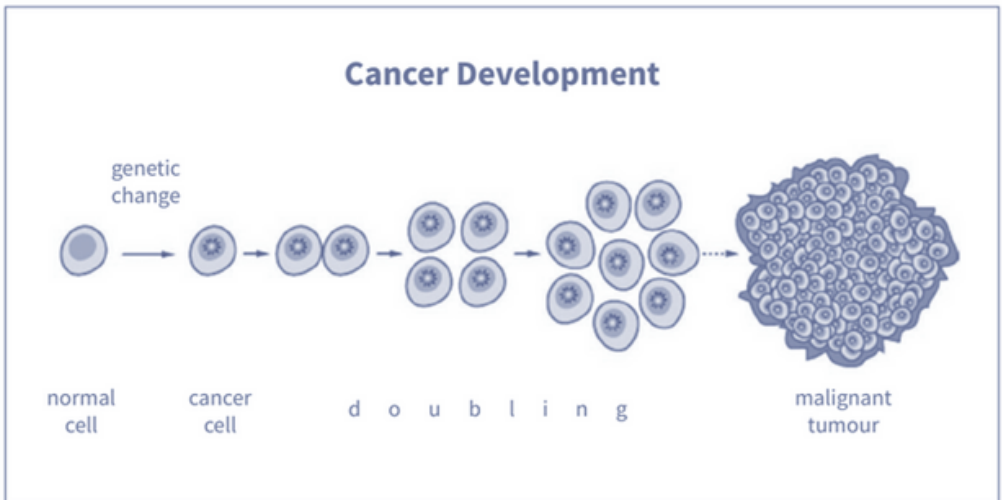
There are **two types of tumours**

- **Malignant** which is a cancer
- **Benign** which is not a cancer.

A growing tumour becomes a lump of cancer cells that can go on to destroy the normal cells around it.

Some of these tumour cells can break away and travel to other parts of the body where it starts up in a new place. This is called metastasis.

Sometimes cancer doesn't appear as a tumour in/on our body. Our blood cells can also become cancerous. These cancer cells may be found in your blood, or in your bone marrow, inside your bones.



HE TOHU WHAKATŪPATO

Warning signs

There are a lot of whānau that just leave things far too late and unfortunately the outcome has not been good for them. Don't do that to yourself or your whānau, please!

You know your body better than anyone, if you notice things changing or happening that aren't usual for you, please see a doctor.

Ongoing changes such as:

- Unexpected weight loss
- Fatigue (feeling weak, being constantly tired, or lacking energy)
- Unusual lump or swelling in your testicle, breast or elsewhere
- Blood in your mimi (urine) or tiko (bowel motion).

- Cough that won't go away
- Difficulty having a mimi (passing urine)
- Heavy night sweats
- Breast or nipple changes
- Unexplained vaginal bleeding or discharge
- Sores that won't heal
- Pain that doesn't improve.

It is so important to go to the doctor **as soon as you notice** any of these unusual changes. Talk with your GP if you have a known family history of any cancer.

If nothing the doctor has given you is helping—then go back or see another doctor.

Please take someone with you if you are needing extra support and comfort.

Close whānau members

Please talk with your doctor if you have had close whānau members (brothers, sisters, mother, father, cousins, aunties, uncles) with cancer. This may mean we need to be more watchful for any specific changes in your body, as the risk of cancer may be higher for you.



HE WHAKATĀHARA HARA

How to reduce your risk of cancer

There are things we can do right now to reduce the risk of cancer.

You can reduce your risk by:

- Being smoke free and in a smoke free environment
- Eating a diet high in fruit and vegetables and low in saturated fat and sugar
- Being a healthy weight
- Doing regular physical activity
- Reducing your alcohol intake
- Being sun smart is about protecting your skin and eyes from damaging UV radiation from the sun. Slip, slop, slap and wrap.
 - **Slip** on a shirt with long sleeves
 - **Slip** into the shade of a leafy tree or umbrella when outside
 - **Slop** on plenty of broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen (at least SPF 50). Put on 20 minutes before going outside then reapply every two hours and after being in water or sweating.
 - **Slap** on a wide-brimmed hat or cap with flaps
 - **Wrap** on sunglasses. Choose close-fitting, wrap around sunglasses. Always check that your sunglasses protect against UV radiation
- Undertaking the recommended screening for different cancers
- Being aware of the early signs and symptoms of cancer.



HIKARETI ME TE MATEPUKUPUKU

Smoking and cancer



Smoking increases the risk of cancer. The link between smoking and cancer is very clear after years of research both here in New Zealand, and internationally. One quarter of New Zealand's cancer deaths are caused, by smoking.

Smoking is linked to many types of cancers including:

- Lung
- Oesophagus
- Mouth
- Upper throat
- Pancreas
- Bladder
- Bowel
- Larynx
- Kidney
- Stomach
- Liver
- Leukaemia
- Ovary
- Cervix

Smoking kills about 5000 people per year. Breathing in second-hand smoke (from other people's smoking) kills about 400 people per year.

Drinking and smoking
together rather than just
drinking or just smoking
increases the cancer
risk even more.

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE THOUGH!

Things you can do:

- Become smokefree. Call Quitline for advice and support to help you. Quitline can assess what would be best suited to you and provide an exchange card for nicotine patches or gum to help you quit.
- Avoid other people's smoke
- Have a smokefree whare (home) and waka (car)
- Ask your friends and whānau to be good examples and not smoke around the children



STOP SMOKING SERVICES NORTHLAND

Carving a Smokefree Northland

Quit Coaches
We are here to help you!

0508 TOKI RAU

0508 865 4728

referrals@tokirau.co.nz

Did you know - It is now illegal to smoke or vape in most vehicles carrying children aged under 18 years old - whether the vehicle is moving or not.

MATEPUKUPUKU ME TE WAIPIRO

Alcohol and cancer

Many of us don't know that drinking alcohol increases the risk of developing cancers of the mouth, upper throat, voice-box, food-pipe, bowel, liver and breast (in women). Also, there is some evidence that alcohol increases the risk of stomach and pancreatic cancer. If you combine smoking with drinking, your risk of cancer may increase significantly.

Ways to reduce your alcohol-related cancer risk:

- Do more activities that don't involve drinking.
- Reduce the amount of alcohol you drink, and drink less often.
- Switch to low-strength alcoholic drinks



To help reduce the cancers that are caused by alcohol, we want to see it made less available, less convenient, and less affordable in our communities. Visit www.alcoholdrughelp.org.nz

KAI

Healthy choices

There is convincing evidence that being overweight or obese increases the risk of developing some of the most common cancers.

It is likely that eating more fruit and vegetables will reduce the risk of developing some cancers. Choose plenty of vegetables and fruits in a variety of colours every day.

The guidelines for reducing cancer risk are the same as guidelines for cancer survivors, cardiovascular disease prevention and diabetes prevention as well as general good health.

No particular foods or eating patterns are guaranteed to prevent cancer; however, some foods and eating patterns can reduce your risk.



KORIKORI TINANA

Physical activity

Being physically active on most days is an important part of being healthy. Many people know that being active helps prevent heart disease, diabetes, stroke and weight gain, but they do not always realise it is also important for reducing cancer risk.



HE MAHI ĀRAI MATEPUKUPUKU

For cancer prevention

For cancer prevention the scientific evidence suggests the more physical activity you do the better, and that 30 minutes a day is not enough. Recent research suggests you need to do 60 minutes or more, of moderate activity or 30 minutes of vigorous activity every day. However any exercise is better than no exercise.

- Moderate intensity activity causes a slight but noticeable increase in breathing and heart rate.
- Vigorous activity makes you “huff and puff”.
- Getting out and participating in fun activities with your whānau is a great way to be active and role model wellness;
 - Whānau hikoi (family walk)
 - Wā kaukau (swim time)
 - Haere ki tātahi (going to the beach)



Why worry about nutrition and physical activity?

- About 1 in 5 cancers, or 18% diagnosed each year are related to having too much body fat, physical inactivity, excess alcohol consumption, and poor nutrition – and could be prevented! (World Cancer Research Fund)
There are 13 cancers that are linked to being overweight.
- Nearly 40% of NZ adults are classified as obese, with higher rates for Māori and Pasifika (NZ Health Survey)

RONGOA MĀORI

Māori Medicine



Rongoa Māori is the traditional healing system of Aotearoa NZ which may contribute to cancer prevention through its emphasis on balance across physical, mental, spiritual, and whānau aspects of living. It includes practices such as mirimiri, (massage) and native plant-based remedies.

WHAKATEWHATEWHA

Early detection is your best protection

Screening is not able to provide you with a definite ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer to the question of “do I have cancer”? A positive result does not mean you definitely have cancer, it may mean that you need further investigation to determine whether you may or may not have cancer. A negative result does not mean you are definitely cancer free. It just means that cancer has not been detected at that time, but does not mean that it may not develop in the future.

HE RĪANGA Ū

Breast screening

Mammograms can find breast cancer early. You are more likely to survive breast cancer if it is found early and is still small. Mammograms can show changes inside the breast before they can be felt. While some cancers develop more slowly, others can grow more quickly. It’s important to find any cancer as early as possible before it spreads. That’s why it’s important to get a regular mammogram every 2 years – it gives you the best chance of picking up any changes.



Your breasts deserve your attention too

Breast screening is easy and saves lives.

If you're aged 45–69 book your free breast screen today. Freephone **0800 270 200** or visit **TimeToBreastScreen.nz**



Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora



Breast cancer is the most common cancer affecting women in New Zealand. It affects more wāhine Māori than other women. More than 3,000 women in NZ are diagnosed with breast cancer every year. There are a number of types of breast cancer, and why they develop is not completely understood. 25 men are also diagnosed with breast cancer every year.

Free breast screening for women aged 45 –69 years is provided by the national breast screening programme, Breast Screen Aotearoa.

The aim of breast screening is to find very small cancers before a lump can be felt in the breast. Early treatment has the best chance of success.

Although breast cancer is uncommon in women under 50, all women need to look for any unusual lumps and changes to the breast through doing self-examinations regularly. Seeing a GP promptly with any concerns will be hugely beneficial to ensure early diagnosis.



Mammography screening:

- Is quick and easy
- Detects cancer but cannot prevent it
- Does not guarantee that cancer is not present
- Reduces the risk of dying from breast cancer but does not prevent it.

Free for women aged 45-69 years - soon to extend to 74yrs
0800 270 200

WHARE TANGATA

Cervical screening

Cervical cancer is highly preventable through cervical screening every **5 years**



He huarahi whakamaru
mō te whare tangata,
mō te iwi.

A way of protection for
the womb, and for the
future of all.

Cervical cancer is caused by a virus called human papillomavirus or (HPV) which is contracted during any intimate activities. HPV affects almost all people at some point in their lives. There is no medication for HPV infections, but most infections will clear on their own. A few 'high-risk' types of HPV may lead to abnormal (precancerous) cells.

Free for women/anyone with a cervix aged 25-69 years
0800 729 729

*'I'm doing this
for me and my
whānau'*

**Time to
screen**

National
Cervical
Screening
Programme

*My health, my body, my future
Taku hauora, taku tinana, taku tūmanako*

New Zealand Government

Health Promotion

FREEPHONE **0800 729 729**
FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT **www.timetoscreen.nz**

New Zealand Cervical Screening Programme

HPV WHAKAMĀTAUTAU

HPV self-testing

THE NEW WAY!

- HPV self-testing can be easily done by yourself at either clinic or home.
- Some outcomes may result in needing a traditional smear done by a nurse.
- Regular HPV-self screening and smear tests approximately every 5 years is the best way of preventing cervical cancer from developing.
- Women who have received the HPV vaccine have a reduced chance of ongoing concerns with HPV, however HPV and cervical screening are still required. Discuss if you are eligible with your health provider.

Remember?

- Bleeding or spotting between menstrual periods.
- Bleeding or spotting after sexual intercourse
- Bleeding or spotting after your menstrual periods have stopped (after menopause)
- Persistent pain in your pelvis
- Pain during sexual intercourse
- Unusual discharge from the vagina: the discharge might be smelly, have changed colour from white to pink, brown, or green, or be streaked with blood.

These symptoms can happen for several reasons and rarely mean that you have cervical cancer, however they should be checked by your doctor.

HPV VACCINATION

HPV prevention - Gardasil 9 is free for those aged 9 to under 27 years, for both girls and boys. Available with your family doctor or nurse.



WHAKAMĀTAUTAU WHĒKAU

Bowel screening

This is a free programme to help detect bowel cancer. Bowel cancer is cancer in any part of the large bowel (colon or rectum). Large bowel cancer occurs when cells grow abnormally and form a lump or tumour. Most bowel cancers are found in the large bowel. There may be no signs that you have bowel cancer. However, bowel screening can help save lives.

Bowel screening is offered every two years to men and women aged 60-74 years who are eligible for publicly funded health care

Those eligible to take part will be sent:

- An invitation letter
- A consent form
- A free bowel screening test kit, with instructions on how to use it.
- The test is free and is done at home and is simple to do.

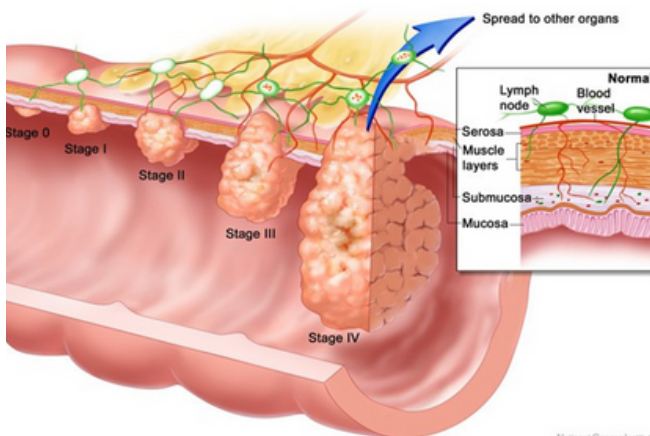
The test used is a faecal immunochemical test (FIT). It can detect tiny traces of blood present in a small sample of your bowel motion (poo). This may be an early warning sign that something is wrong with your bowel. Bowel cancer can be treated successfully if caught early.

What are the symptoms of bowel cancer?

Common symptoms of bowel cancer may include:

- A change in your normal bowel habit that continues for several weeks.
- Blood in your bowel motion.

Although these symptoms are usually caused by other conditions, it is important to get them checked by a doctor.



You can reduce your risk of bowel cancer by:

- having a healthy diet high in fruit, vegetables and fibre.
- regular exercise.
- being smokefree.

If you have had extensive inflammatory bowel disease, or have a family history of bowel cancer, you may have a higher risk of developing bowel cancer.



Who should do the test

Most people aged 60-74 years who have no obvious symptoms of bowel cancer can do the free bowel screening test. This includes people who are at increased risk of bowel cancer.

(it is expected to be lowered to 58 soon)

However, bowel screening is not right for everyone. You should NOT take part if you:

- Have symptoms of bowel cancer (Present to your GP for assessment immediately)
- Have had a colonoscopy within the last five years
- Are having regular surveillance colonoscopies for polyps or a family history of bowel cancer.
- Have had, or are currently being treated for, bowel cancer.
- Have had your large bowel removed.
- Have inflammatory bowel disease: Ulcerative Colitis or Crohn's disease that is currently active.
- Are currently seeing your doctor about bowel problems



Speak to your Doctor

Some people may have an increased risk of developing bowel cancer. The risk factors include:

- you have two or more close whānau members on the same side of the whānau who have had bowel cancer.
- you have a close whānau member who was diagnosed with bowel cancer at a young age (under 55 years).
- you or your whānau have a known or suspected genetic bowel cancer syndrome.
- you have had extensive inflammatory bowel disease, such as ulcerative colitis, for more than 10 years.

If you have one of these risk factors you should discuss this with your doctor at your next visit.

Checklist

Yes

No

I have had runny tiko (diarrhoea) for several weeks OR

☐☐

I have had hard tiko (constipation) for several weeks

☐☐

I feel that when I have a tiko (bowel motion) my bowel hasn't emptied completely

☐☐

My puku is uncomfortable (frequent gas pains, bloating or cramps)

☐☐

I've lost weight and am feeling tired

☐☐

If you have any of these symptoms, see your doctor

Did you know

If you are younger or older than the free government screening age and wish to have a test, you can now order a private testing kit at a cost through IGENZ (www.igenz.co.nz).

MATEPUKUPUKU REPE TĀTEA

Prostate cancer

All men have a prostate. The prostate is a small walnut-shaped gland that surrounds the bladder opening. Prostate cancer is the most common cancer found in men. If caught early, prostate cancer can be managed well and can usually be cured. Māori men are more likely to die of prostate cancer than non-Māori, usually because the cancer is found too late to cure.

Checklist	Yes	No
I am having a mimi more often.	☐	☐
When I mimi, I have trouble getting started or stopping.	☐	☐
I have a poor mimi flow or I dribble.	☐	☐
I often get up at night to have a mimi.	☐	☐
I have blood in my mimi.	☐	☐
I have pain in my lower back, hips or ribs.	☐	☐
I have a family history of prostate cancer and I'm 40 years old or more.	☐	☐
I am 50 to 70 years old.	☐	☐
I am concerned or want to know more.	☐	☐

Answering yes to any of these points may not mean you have cancer, but you should get them checked by your doctor, nurse or health professional straight away.

When deciding about a prostate check, you may want to talk to a member of your whānau and a trusted health professional (doctor or nurse).

HELPLINE: 0800 4 PROSTATE (0800 477 678)



Checking your risk of prostate cancer

Checks usually involve a blood test called a prostate-specific antigen test (**PSA**) and a digital rectal examination (**DRE**).

The prostate gland makes **PSA**. The higher the level of **PSA**, the more likely it is to be a sign of cancer.

DRE - this is a quick way for your doctor to check whether there may be a problem with your prostate. To feel the surface of your prostate, the doctor will place a gloved finger into your rectum (bottom). You are more likely to have prostate cancer if your prostate feels rough, hard or irregular.

A prostate check aims to reduce your chances of being harmed or dying from prostate cancer. While the PSA blood test and the DRE may be uncomfortable, there is no risk from having them. They do not harm you in any way.

Testicular cancer

Testicular cancer is the most common cancer for men aged 15–39. Testicular cancer is the presence of cancer cells or a cancerous growth in or on the testicles. It is very treatable if caught early. Monthly self-examinations are recommended.

Not all lumps in the testicles are cancerous, but it's recommended that if anything unusual is noticed that you see a doctor about this as soon as possible. Men that were born with undescended testes are more at risk, but there is no further known cause of testicular cancer. Māori men have considerably higher rates of testicular cancer than non-Māori men.

To find out more about how to do self-examinations, symptoms and diagnosis go to:

www.testicular.org.nz
or phone
0800 660 800

MATEPUKUPUKU - HE KUPU

Words related to cancer - what do they mean?

Biopsy

A biopsy is when a sample of cells or tissues are removed from the patient to be looked at under a microscope and studied to see if there are any signs of disease. You can have a biopsy to test for many diseases, not just cancer.

Benign

A benign tumour is not a malignant tumour or cancer. It does not spread to other parts of the body like cancer can.

Chemotherapy/‘Chemo’

Chemotherapy is the treatment of cancer with anti-cancer drugs. When cancer is treated with chemotherapy, the person takes medicine in either a tablet, intravenous or injection form. The chemicals in the medicine are designed to attack and kill the cancer cells.

Carcinogens

Carcinogens are substances that can cause genes to alter their state.

Colonoscopy

Colonoscopy is a procedure in which a trained specialist uses a long, flexible, narrow tube with a light and tiny camera on one end, to look inside your nono (bottom) and bowel. Colonoscopy can show irritated and swollen tissue, ulcers, polyps, and cancer.

Digital Rectal Examination (DRE)

The doctor will insert a gloved finger into your nono to feel any abnormalities in the prostate gland.

Radiation Therapy /Radio Therapy

Radiation therapy is when radiation is used to kill cancer cells. The area where the cancer is in the body is marked with a pen and then the radiation machine is directed at this area.

Staging

This term is a way of describing the extent of a cancer, how big the tumour is, and if and where it has spread to. This helps doctors decide on the best course of treatment.

Ultrasound test

The ultrasound test uses sound waves that create a picture of an area on the body being scanned, which then shows on a computer screen. The ultrasound transducer is passed over the body on top of a transparent gel that has been put onto the person's skin.



CT/CAT scan

(Computerised Axial Tomography scan) A CT scan takes a 3D image using x-ray measurements to create images of the body. This allows your doctors or medical team to view the inside structures of your body.

PET CT scan

(Positron Emission Tomography) A PET CT scan begins with an injection of a glucose based radiopharmaceutical called fluorodeoxyglucose (FDG). A PET CT is used to detect and diagnose disease early so treatment can start quickly. It is also used to evaluate organs and/or tissues for the presence of disease or other conditions, as well as evaluating treatment.

MRI scan

(Magnetic Resonance Imaging scan) The MRI scan uses magnets to create an image of a body on a computer. It may take slightly longer than 30 minutes to do the MRI scan and the patient has to lie very still inside a metal cylinder. The machine is very loud so patients are usually asked to wear ear plugs.

Doctors prefer to use the MRI scan when looking at the soft tissues of the body as it produces clearer pictures than the CT scan for those areas.

Malignant

Cancer is caused by cells in our bodies continuing to divide when they should have stopped. The dividing cells create a lump that is called a tumour. There are two types of tumours. One is cancerous, and the other is not cancer. A malignant tumour is cancerous. A benign tumour is not.

Laparoscopy

A laparoscope is a long tube with a camera at one end and an eye piece at the other. It is like an endoscope. When having a laparoscopy the patient has small cuts made into their abdomen through which the laparoscopy enters the body so that the doctor can see inside.

Endoscopy

An endoscopy is a long tube that has a camera on the end. You swallow the tube so that the camera can look inside your body.

Mammogram

A mammogram is the test that women have to try and detect breast cancer early. The mammogram machine squeezes the breast between two plates and pictures are taken of the breast tissue.



WHA KARĀPOPO TO

Summary?



- Adjusting to life with cancer can be challenging.
- Some cancer treatments can be tough, but sticking with them will help in the long term.
- The longer we leave it to see a doctor, the risk of not surviving cancer increases.
- **The good news is;** at least one third of all cancer cases are preventable.
- Cancer cells can often be treated and destroyed.
- There are many medications and treatments available for cancer now that weren't around a few years ago.
- There is heaps of information and support available to you.
- We have very good cancer services in this region
- Implementing the New Zealand Cancer Action Plan 2019-2029 is a key focus for Te Aho o Te Kahu – **Cancer Control Agency:** www.health.govt.nz/publication/new-zealand-cancer-action-plan-2019-2029

HAPORI TAUPUHIPUHI

Community support

Your first line of support is to talk with someone you can trust, this could be a partner, parent, friend, aunty, cousin or neighbour. Within your area there will be support services available. An example of these may include your own GP or Practice Nurse, and local Māori Health Providers.



Cancer Society Auckland Northland

Working together towards a
future free from cancer

Cancer Society is a free service that offers a range of support and services to people and whānau going through cancer.

Services include:

- One on one support from a nurse and social worker.
- Free Psychology and Counselling services
- Accommodation for people having radiation treatment.
- Transport to cancer related appointments.
- Support groups



Cancer Society also offer a cancer awareness programme called Kia ora - E te iwi.

Kia ora - E te iwi is a kaupapa Māori based wānanga for Whānau and community groups to come together to kōrero about cancer treatment, prevention, services and support.

Phone: 0800 CANCER (226 237) or 09 308 0160
Domain Lodge 1 Boyle Cres, Grafton Auckland

- | | | | |
|---------------|---|-----------------|---|
| When: | First Wednesday, Every Month 9:30am - 11:30am, excluding January and public holidays. | Details: | An engaging and supportive group who meet to learn and connect. |
| Where: | Auckland Botanic Gardens - 102 Hill Road, The Gardens, Auckland | For: | All those affected by cancer, patients and supporters. |

Just turn up, rain or shine!

Any questions, email: psychologicalservice@akcansoc.org.nz

TAIME

Taime Pasifika Cancer Support was established in July 2023 because of lived experience. Taime (*tie-meh*), which means **time** in Cook Islands Māori, is a word that resonates with people who are living with cancer or have survived it.

We understand the challenge and the courage it takes to confront a diagnosis. That's why we created a space where Pasifika people can feel safe, informed, and uplifted. Whether you've just received a diagnosis, are navigating treatment, or are finding your way after recovery, Taime is here for you. We offer free programmes that are culturally responsive, filling gaps that can make a significant difference. We advocate, we listen, and we celebrate every step forward.



www.taime.co.nz



021 0248 5177



support@taime.co.nz



Tōtara Hospice provides adult specialist palliative care services to the communities of South and South-East Auckland, proudly supporting the diverse backgrounds, lifestyles, and beliefs of our patient community. Our multidisciplinary team works closely with GPs, hospital teams, and community services to deliver expert-led, holistic support for both patients and their whānau, ensuring comfort and dignity throughout their journey.

Our services are provided at no cost to our patients and whānau

Phone: 09 640 0025 | Email: info@hospice.co.nz

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**Cancer
Society**

Te Kāhui Matepukupuku
o Aotearoa