

45 – 49 years: are you at risk?

Heading toward 50, many of us are already at risk for chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, depression, cancer etc.

You can feel well while you have risk factors and even once some chronic diseases have begun.

Medicare allows a once off health assessment for people aged 45 - 49 with a single risk factor.

Consider the following questions:

- Are you concerned about your weight?
- Do you eat many processed foods?
- Would you benefit from more exercise?
- Do you smoke?

- Do you have a family history of chronic disease? e.g. heart disease, cancer, diabetes, asthma, mental health conditions, arthritis etc.
- Do you have high blood pressure?
- Do you have high cholesterol?
- Do you have high blood glucose (sugar)?
- Are you or others concerned about your drinking?

You may be at risk if you answered yes or don't know to any of these questions.

Call reception and ask for a 45-49 health check appointment with an Allied Health team member linked to the doctor of your choice.

Advance Care Planning

Advance care planning involves thinking of your wishes for future care. Especially focusing on what you would want if you became unable to make your own decisions.

Advance care planning allows us to make "directives". These directives can be:

- (i) instructional: about specific treatments we would want or would refuse (legally binding) or
- (ii) values directed: outlining your views and values so that others making decisions in the future have a good sense of what you would want for yourself.

For more information put the words *Better Health Channel advance care plan* into your search engine.

The Office of the Public Advocate has published the booklet "*Take Control*" - this describes the process and contains copies of the official forms "Advance care directive", "Appointment of a medical treatment decision maker", and "Enduring power of attorney appointment".

Our nurses who do annual health assessments for those 75 and over have copies of "*Take Control*" on hand and encourage patients to make an advance care plan.

However age and current health status should not stop us from thinking about our wishes, discussing them with loved ones and making an advance care plan now.

We don't know what the future holds.

Access to services for the aged

Older people living at home may be eligible for a range of services such as home help, showering, meals, walking aids etc. Eligibility depends on your health & welfare status and needs.

Last year the Government changed the way people access services. Those over the age of 65 must now be assessed first through the *My Aged Care* service (web or phone based) to determine eligibility for services.

For those with significant disabilities, it can be helpful for relatives to help out with the process as it is lengthy and can be confusing. Waits for services have been long so starting the application for assessment earlier rather than later is advised.

Be aware that people cannot get placements in **Government subsidised** Residential Aged Care Facilities without having approval via this process.

An alternative assessment is possible for those with simpler/minimal needs. The Regional Assessment Service can assess for and organise services to meet low level needs. Those with more complex issues and higher levels of need can only be processed from within *My Aged Care* via an Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS).

Donna Devlin, Home Care Manager at our sister company New Aged Care, can help with the process – call Donna on 0428 487 979 or call New Aged Care on 5427 2002.