

PlunketLine always there – even over Christmas

Sleep, sickness, starting solids: there's always something going on when you're looking after kids – and they don't take a break over Christmas.

PlunketLine, Whānau Āwhina Plunket's free 24/7 parent helpline, doesn't stop either. Anyone with questions or worries about tamariki under five can call the PlunketLine team at any time – even on Christmas Day.

PlunketLine Manager Tania Dick says the 50-strong PlunketLine team is made up of registered nurses, with call centres in Wellington, Auckland, Tauranga, Nelson and Christchurch – and you don't need to be a Whānau Āwhina Plunket client to use PlunketLine.

“Our nurses work one of four shifts each day, similar to the model found in hospitals. This shift-based roster along with the tele-health model allows PlunketLine to operate 24/7 and help whānau around the motu whenever they need it.”

Last year, the PlunketLine team handed nearly 110,000 calls and completed more than 800 breastfeeding video conferences to help families needing support from a lactation consultant. That's an average of 300 calls a day.

“No parent would be surprised to learn that the most common calls to PlunketLine relate to sleep – particularly how to get pēpi and tamariki to snooze,” says Ms Dick. “Other common queries are around feeding, such as starting solids and how to progress at different ages, and child behaviour, including dealing with tantrums and toilet training.”

And when childhood ills rear their unwelcome heads, PlunketLine is there, too.

“As well as these routine parenting queries, our nurses also play a really important role in helping parents or caregivers when they're worried because their child is unwell,” Ms Dick explains.

“It can be frightening when your tamariki is ill, especially in the middle of the night, and parents and caregivers are often very stressed and worried when they call.

“A nurse will ask their caller questions to find out the symptoms, then direct the parent or caregiver to the best option – that could be advice or a referral to a health centre or even hospital.”

PlunketLine caters to speakers of languages other than English and Māori, says Ms Dick. Some PlunketLine staff speak other languages, while external interpreters may also be called on. People with varying levels of deafness are helped via a deaf relay service.

Ms Dick says she finds her role at PlunketLine to be very rewarding.

“It's an absolute pleasure that whānau choose to call us about their treasured pēpi and tamariki and that we can make a positive difference for them,” she says.

“I love this job because it is all about helping people.”

Call PlunketLine on [0800 933 922](tel:0800933922) for 24/7 parenting help. Calls are free, even from cell phones.

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For more information please contact:

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