

Green Script - Karlijna

In less than a year, Karlijna Richards has lost 20 kilograms. She's a regular at the gym and can often be seen power walking around South Hagley Park. The change in her lifestyle is something she credits to a programme called Green Prescription - a Ministry of Health-funded initiative run by Sport Canterbury.

The programme aims to help Kiwis make better lifestyle choices and improve their wellbeing and fitness. Best of all, it's free to join and anyone over the age of 18 is eligible. Sport Canterbury physical health adviser Zara Taylor is the first point of contact for people in the Burwood-Pegasus ward. They're usually referred by their doctor or a medical practitioner, but anyone can sign up with no referral required. The only prerequisite is a will to improve your lifestyle. Zara meets clients to discuss their goals, whether it's losing weight, getting fitter, or exercising as part of managing a medical condition. The idea is to make changes without just resorting to medication as the quick fix for ailments. Every Sport Canterbury team member is highly qualified and linked to a network of like-minded professionals, from physiotherapists to nutritionists and personal trainers.

Green Prescription clients are given options to help them meet their goals. Zara might refer someone to a free yoga class in their area or link them up with a walking group. The trick is finding what each person is interested in doing and helping them find an affordable way to reach their goals. Sport Canterbury's networks are huge and a great resource for ensuring clients find a cheap class or group to join. The team will follow up with their clients over four months to see how they're getting on and motivate them to stick to their goals. Some Green Prescription clients join Sport Canterbury's Be Active programme - something Karlijna has experienced firsthand. She did the programme back in 2012 when she wanted to lose some weight, and again last year, when she needed help managing a medical condition. Be Active is a full programme of 90 minute sessions split into 45 minutes of physical activity and 45 minutes of education on topics such as healthy eating.



It aims to provide a holistic kick-start to getting healthier. This time around, Karlijna shed 20 kilos and stuck with her gym workout. She even uses baby Charlotte as a weight to do fun exercises in front of the television at night.

"It was just finding an activity I enjoyed," she says. "I recommend the programme to anyone really."

Sport Canterbury is keen to get more Cantabrians involved. It has funding for more than 3500 people this year and welcomes anyone willing to give it a go.

"All the staff are so supportive; there's no judgment. They're there to help and, although it is quite nerve-racking, there's no real reason to feel nervous at all."

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