



Media Statement

08 August, 2018

The Countdown Is On To Support Northland Children

Four year-old Whaiawa Tito, who like her dad Pat, has Type 1 diabetes. There is no cure for Type 1 diabetes, and it requires constant careful self-management and good medical care.

Whaiawa is the Northland face of the 2018 Countdown Kids Hospital Appeal which was launched today and raises funds that will be given to the DHB to buy medical equipment to help ease the stress on the lives of families with a range of medical conditions.

Mum Lisa says because Whaiawa's body doesn't produce insulin, every time she eats they need to know exactly how many carbohydrates are in what she's eating.

"With the help from dieticians, we work out ratios to figure out how much insulin to give her. We also have to watch how much activity she does to ensure she doesn't get too low. It can be especially difficult during an illness, which means something like a tummy bug can be life-threatening to her."

When Whaiawa was diagnosed, the Tito's decided to look for other options to reduce the need for Whaiawa to be finger pricked up to 15 times per day.

Both Whaiawa and Pat started using Freestyle Libre Blood Sugar Sensors, which constantly monitor their insulin levels without the need for needles. The couple said they wouldn't consider giving them up, despite the hefty \$100 per fortnight cost to the family.

Lisa says the sensors have made a massive difference to their lives because they haven't had to interrupt Whaiawa's life so much and the device gives much more information than the normal blood sugar finger pricking does.

"The monitoring can help prevent high and low blood sugar levels, it's easy to just scan her at night and helps us tailor the medication she needs. Because of the constant monitoring her levels are really good which will help to prevent her from getting kidney and eye damage or having to go on dialysis in the future," says Lisa.

The Northland DHB is hoping to use a portion of the funds raised from the Countdown Kids Hospital Appeal to purchase a stock of Freestyle Libre Blood Sugar Sensors to loan out to families who can't afford the device.

This will enable them to have a break from having to do the normal blood sugar finger pricks. They will also offer it to families to do a period of intensive sugar monitoring to try to improve their diabetes control. Which will, in turn, reduce the need for hospital admissions for these families and also help with monitoring when doing major changes in insulin regimes.

Over 7500 children and babies are admitted to one of the four Northland hospitals each year. Funds raised by the Countdown Kids Hospital Appeal help Northland DHB Maternal and Child Health Services provide families with travel incubators, apnoea monitors, scanners, breast pumps, an electronic hoist with scales, humidifiers, La-Z-Boy chairs and a range of medical equipment across the SCBU, Maternity Services and other departments.

Last year Countdown presented Northland DHB Child Health Services with \$112,158 thanks to the amazing support from the Northland community.

“Thousands of children and their families experience hospitals each year, and whether it’s for a short stay or for longer, it’s always a tough time. Through the generosity of our customers and fundraising efforts of the Countdown team we can all help make a huge difference to the life of a little one and their family during a traumatising time,” says Ruth Krippner, chair of the Countdown Kids Hospital Appeal Trust.

This year’s Countdown Kids Hospital Appeal runs from 6 August – 28 October.

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