

7 July 2010



Dear Colleagues

Change in provision of Well Child telephone advice

From 1 July, people seeking telephone advice on parenting and related issues for children under five are being asked to call PlunketLine only. Previously, both PlunketLine and the Well Child Telephone Advice Service (accessible through the Healthline number) provided advice on issues such as child development, behaviour and nutrition. Both services are funded by the Ministry of Health.

We are currently undertaking a project to identify and amend mentions of the Well Child Telephone Advice Service on the Ministry's website, in child/parent media, and on non-Ministry websites, as the Well Child Telephone Advice Service has now been discontinued.

Healthline will continue to provide telephone triage, information and advice about sick or symptomatic children of all ages, including under-fives. It also provides a full range of telephone triage and health advice for children over five and adults.

Healthline and Plunketline will work together to ensure a seamless service for callers. From 1 July, Healthline will transfer any 'well child' calls to PlunketLine. PlunketLine already transfers calls about sick children to Healthline, and will continue to do this.

Because calls will be transferred, parents are unlikely to notice any difference. However, parents with well children, wanting support or information, should ring PlunketLine directly, and parents with sick children should ring Healthline.

Reason for the change

The Ministry of Health funds a number of free health and development checks for children under five, through the Well Child/Tamariki Ora programme. Depending on the age of the child, Well Child/Tamariki Ora checks include an assessment of family health and wellbeing, child growth and development, vision and hearing, behaviour and oral health.

This year the Ministry published the report of the Parent Information Project. The project aimed to determine the best ways to provide on-demand Well Child/Tamariki Ora information, advice and support to parents.

The report findings strongly supported the integration of telephone advisory services with face-to-face Well Child services delivered in the community.

Plunket is the only national provider of community-based Well Child services, and the change has been made to better integrate face-to-face and telephone-based Well Child services for children under five.

Key messages

We would be very grateful if you could amend any references you have to the Well Child Telephone Advice Service and pass these key messages to relevant staff.

Key messages are:

- Ring PlunketLine on 0800 933 922 if you have child health and parenting questions or queries. For example, if you have questions about such issues as parenting, crying, sleeping, your child's growth, development, behaviour, immunisation, breastfeeding, nutrition, oral health, safety or want to know more about the Well Child/Tamariki Ora programme.
- Call Healthline on 0800 611 116 if you need advice about a child of any age who is unwell or hurt, or has any symptoms of sickness. Healthline also provides a full range of telephone triage and health advice for children over five and adults.
- Both services are available 24 hours and are free to callers, including from a mobile phone.

We have also attached some Frequently Asked Questions that may be helpful.

Thank you in anticipation of your assistance with this.

Yours sincerely



Nohopuku Williams
**Manager, Family and Whanau Services, Public Health
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Frequently Asked Questions

When should I ring PlunketLine?

Ring PlunketLine on 0800 933 922 if you have child health and parenting questions or queries. For example, if you have questions about such issues as parenting, crying, sleeping, your child's growth, development, behaviour, immunisation, breastfeeding, nutrition, oral health, safety or want to know more about the Well Child/Tamariki Ora programme.

When should I ring Healthline?

Call Healthline on 0800 611 116 if you need advice about a child of any age who is unwell or hurt, or has any symptoms of sickness. Healthline also provides a full range of telephone triage and health advice for children over five and adults.

What happens if I ring the wrong telephone advice service?

You will be transferred to the correct service. That is, if you ring PlunketLine with a query about a sick child you will be transferred to Healthline. If you ring Healthline with a parenting or child health and wellbeing query relating to a child under five, you will be transferred to PlunketLine.

Why is PlunketLine now the sole provider of telephone advice on parenting issues and child wellbeing?

Previously, both PlunketLine and Well Child Telephone Advice Service provided advice relating to well children under five. However, from 1 July, PlunketLine is the sole provider of this service.

In 2008/2009, the Ministry of Health carried out a Parent Information Project to determine the best ways to provide on-demand Well Child/Tamariki Ora information, advice and support to parents.

The Project report strongly supported the integration of Well Child information services with the face-to-face Well Child services being delivered to children and their parents in the community.

Plunket is the only national provider of Well Child face-to-face services, providing 85 percent of community Well Child programme coverage to children up to the age of four, and enrolling over 90 percent of new babies (the balance of service coverage is the responsibility of local providers funded by District Health Boards).

What will be different about PlunketLine?

The new PlunketLine service will incorporate additional functions. Well Child services will be better integrated and more responsive to individual needs for parenting support, whether identified through face-to-face contact with Well Child nurses in the community or from calls to PlunketLine.

Does the change in provider mean the Ministry was unhappy with the service provided by the Well Child Telephone Advice Service?

Not at all. This decision does not reflect on McKesson NZ Ltd's contractual performance in delivering the Well Child Telephone Advice Service, but results from a fundamental policy change on the place of telephone advisory services to support the Well Child programme. McKesson provided the Well Child Telephone Advice Service for four years and will continue to provide Healthline under contract to the Ministry of Health.

What are the phone numbers for PlunketLine and Healthline?

PlunketLine – 0800 933 922

Healthline – 0800 611 116

Calls to both services are free, 24 hours a day, including from a mobile phone.