

## Pensioner amazed he's still standing

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By [Martin Johnston](#)

Ray Kennedy sat calmly in his armchair as it was explained to him that his body harbours nearly four times the national average of dioxin.

Two health and science experts visited the 90-year-old New Plymouth resthome resident in his bedroom to deliver his blood test result.

It showed he has 11.8 parts per trillion of a particular dioxin, compared with a national average of 3 for men over 64.

Later, the former resident of Paritutu, from near the plant that made 2,4,5, T weedkiller until 1987, said he was not worried by the results.

"I don't worry about anything. I simply marvel that I'm still alive," said Mr Kennedy, quickly stretching his legs in and out from his chair to show how well they still work.

For him the results are a kind of victory, proof of his claims over many years that the plant polluted Paritutu.

He said his family, like others in the area, had paid a high price.

He had a section of his bowel removed, after cancer was found, and he still suffers a skin complaint.

One of his daughters, Eileen, who had worked at the plant's packaging section for several years, died aged 52.

Like others, he said, "she just wasted away".

"She got so weak she couldn't even climb stairs."

Mr Kennedy was at first excluded from the testing as his blood's red-cell count was too low, but he ate "lots of steak for dinner - I had to pay extra for it" - and was finally accepted.

He said the contamination findings strengthened the case for some form of compensation from the Government and Dow Agrosiences, the owner of the plant, for affected people.



Ray Kennedy