



Health & Wellness

Leading by example

Leading by example is what the Minister for Health & Medical Services Hon. Jone Usamate is exactly doing.

After taking up the portfolio for the Ministry of Health & Medical Services, Mr Usamate decided to "walk the talk" by making changes to his lifestyle.

What are some of the changes that you have made to your lifestyle?

I have changed my diet and have gone on a largely vegetarian diet. Apart from this I have tried to reduce my intake of processed food. When it comes to meat, the only kind of meat I eat is from the sea or river and I have given up on all other meat. I used to smoke while I drank yaqona and have managed to eliminate that and I try to move my body regularly.

How easy or hard was it to make these changes?

This was not easy. Changing diets is something that we managed to improve by having the whole family involved. So now at home we are vegetarians about 4 to 6 days a week.

After these changes, what is now your usual meal?

For breakfast I usually have cereals with soy milk, fruit and tea. My lunch is vegetarian and I enjoy eating meals from Hare Krishna or

Highland Naturals or I get some fruit. Every now and then I would have some fish for lunch. Dinner is also usually vegetarian meals of soups accompanied with fruits. Again, boiled fish is what I would eat from time to time. Dhal is a favorite and has become quite popular at home.

Do you have an exercise routine?

I try to exercise every day but I am not always successful. I like to play volleyball when I can, walk and do a set of exercises that I do. One set of these exercises takes 10 minutes to complete. I have never ever managed to complete 4 sets.

Have you seen changes in your overall health?

I have lost weight and look better and feel better.

Advise to the public?

The number one thing to keep an eye on is your diet. The more fruits and vegetables you eat and the less processed foods you eat the better it is for you. Do not smoke. Smoking kills.

We also need to move our bodies and exercise or just engage in physical activity.

Do not wait. Eat right. Breathe only oxygen, think good and positive thoughts, grow your spiritual side and move your body. It all helps. Do it now.



Here's to Wellness

"Just as vaccines protect us against CD's, nutrition and physical activity protect us against NCD's. You don't wait until you have measles to get a vaccine, likewise don't wait until you are unwell to practice wellness".

- Dr Isimeli Tukana, National Advisor NCD/Wellness

Check out what our leaders in health have to say about wellness!



Hon.Veena

Dr Tuicakau

Dr Rafai

Mr Marika

Mr Joe

Mrs Veena Bhatnagar
Hon. Assistant Minister for Health & Medical Services

Q: What does Wellness mean to you?

Wellness to me means the wellness of the Body, mind and spirit. And to achieve this we have to strive for positive lifestyle behaviours and taking personal responsibility for one's own health and health care.

Q: How do you incorporate Wellness into your daily life?

I start my day with breathing exercise and after that I have a glass of warm water mixed with Lemon & honey. I have cut down on carbohydrates and have stopped taking soft drinks. I love vegetables, especially all types of Bhaji. Only I and I alone am responsible for my health.

Dr Meciusela Tuicakau
Permanent Secretary for Health & Medical Services

Q: What does Wellness mean to you?

Wellness to me is simply being healthy. This can be done by incorporating a healthy lifestyle that is inclusive of a balanced diet and physical activity.

Q: How do you incorporate Wellness into your daily life?

For me, diet is the biggest challenge. I have cut down on fatty foods as well as salt and sugar intake.

Dr Eric Rafai
Deputy Secretary Public Health

Q: What does Wellness mean to you?

Wellness is the absence of illness, as well as complete physical, mental and social well-being.

Q: How do you incorporate Wellness into your daily life?

I go to the gym every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

Mr Marika Luveniyali
Deputy Secretary Admin & Finance

Q: What does Wellness mean to you?

You have to lead a healthy life and look after yourself physically, mentally, spiritually, & enjoy what you have. Interact with other people and enjoy yourself.

Q: How do you incorporate Wellness into your daily life?

I train every lunchtime- I go to the gym. Also I look after my diet and I don't smoke.

Mr Joe Fuata
Director Human Resources

What does Wellness mean to you?

It's a holistic thing. It's not just the body. It means mentally fit, and it has a spiritual element. It's striking a balance between work and family, and enjoying what you do every day.

Q: How do you incorporate Wellness into your daily life?

I find time on a daily basis to sit with my family and friends, to unwind and not think about work. You need to recharge at the end of the day and have a good work-family balance.

Health always remains a priority

In February, Fiji experienced a category 5 Tropical Cyclone. TC Winston has had a direct or indirect effect on many Fijians today and to date many continue to rebuild their homes and lives.

Like all other Fijians, during the cyclone health staff were busy trying to save their families and themselves by hiding in closets and bathrooms. However despite their own personal challenges, our selfless health staff knew they had no time to rest. Instead, they emerged immediately the very next day to provide health services to those who were injured or hurt. When we spoke to these health staff and heard their stories, they simply said that health services are a priority and that people need to be served no matter what.

"Stronger than Winston" is a true description of our very own health heroes. One of those heroes is staff nurse Theresa Silifu. Ms Silifu was returning home on Saturday and got caught in Cyclone Winston. She had to disembark the bus she was on and walk to the nearest house for shelter. Unfortunately, the house she sheltered in was on the verge of collapse, forcing her to jump through the window. While doing so, she cut her foot on glass and debris shattered by the cyclone.

"I kept on walking till I reached a hill and lay down because the winds were too strong for me to continue walking. I was very scared. Once I felt the winds slow down I started walking again".

She continued walking till she reached Nabukadra Villlage at 2am (21st February) on Sunday morning.

"When I arrived at the village people were happy to see me and I heard them say, "Look the nurse is here". Immediately I started attending to the wounded. Ms Silifu said that a week earlier she had stocked up consumables and medicine supplies with the village nurse, and used this stock to attend to patients.

"Once I finished from here, I had to assist at Verevere Village and got here by boat. I also went to Burewai, Nayavutoka and Sayako before reaching home at 5pm".

"I am proud that I was able to assist and I thank God, for without his help I would not have made it".

Another story is that of staff nurse Asenaca Rika, Waimaro Nursing Station. "I hid in the bathroom with my family as we could hear things flying around outside. We were terrified as we felt part of the roof from our quarters tear away".

Once the cyclone passed through, Ms Rika found Waimaro Nursing Station completely destroyed. She immediately started providing services to patients from her dwelling quarters.

Waimaro Nursing has been renovated and is scheduled for opening in the month of June.

The Health Ministry is very thankful and grateful to these hardworking staff, and all the other unsung heroes out there. Together we are truly stronger than Winston!



Fight the bite- clean up Fiji campaign!



The Ministry of Health & Medical Services and the Fiji Government has embarked on a collective mission in the fight against mosquito-borne diseases by organizing a national clean up campaign.

The campaign, Fight the Bite- Clean Up Fiji! is specifically targeted at destroying mosquito-breeding places as this is the best way to prevent the spread of mosquito borne diseases such as Dengue, Zika and Chikungunya.

The Hon. Minister for Health & Medical Services Mr Jone Usamate said “Our environment has a direct impact on our health. If we keep our surroundings dirty we will get sick or trigger diseases”.

“Dengue, Zika and Chikungunya are mosquito borne diseases that we give life to if our surroundings are littered with containers that are able to hold stagnant water, where the mosquitoes can breed”.

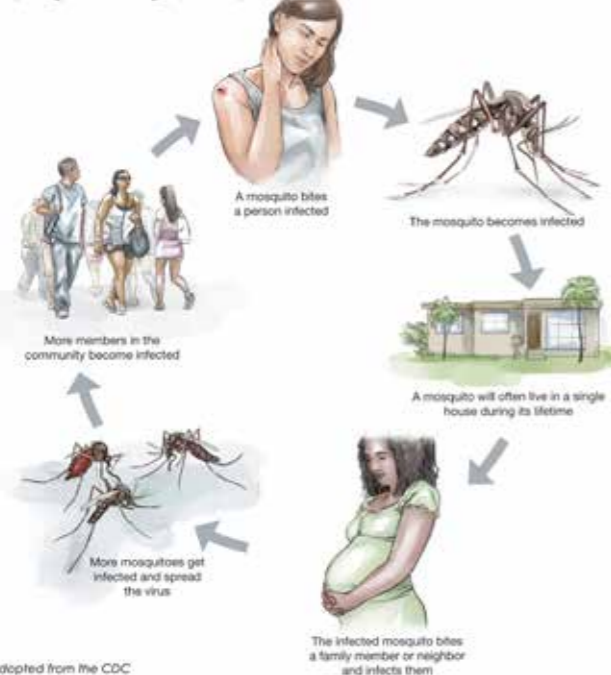
Mr Usamate said that everyone has to work together and quickly to destroy these breeding places.

“Cleaning up and destroying mosquito breeding places will save lives, and will avoid unnecessary expenses for travel and treatment. Ensuring our surroundings are clean will ensure that illnesses/diseases does not affect our productivity with work or school”.

Mr Usamate added that this national cleanup campaign will benefit all people of Fiji as well as visitors to the country.

The Health Ministry has worked in collaboration and support from the Fiji Government, Ministry of Industry and Trade, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Local Government to effectively and efficiently roll out a national clean up campaign for a month.

How Mosquito Illnesses Spread (Dengue, Chikungunya, Zika)



Shoo Flu!

Take special care of loved ones this flu season

With the weather jolting between hot and cold, rainy and humid, it's no secret that flu season is here. Besides securing an umbrella “just in case” the weather changes, there is an important step to take: watch out for loved ones –be sure they invest in rest.

Pregnant women, children and our elderly are especially vulnerable during flu season because their immune systems aren't as strong as others. Add on illnesses such as diabetes, hypertension, heart problems, or asthma, and the flu can take a disastrous toll on vulnerable populations.

“The family can protect pregnant women,” Dr James Fong clarified in an interview, “if a pregnant woman is sick, she needs to truly rest. And not just for an hour or two- she needs to rest until she recovers. She is resting for baby too,” he emphasized. This means that daily activities and chores should be avoided until she recovers.

If a sick person has not fully recovered before going back to their daily routines—such as going to school or doing chores—these activities can be hard on the body and cause the person to become sicker.

These are simple tips anyone can take to beat the flu.

Chronicles of our first road show- the northern tour!

A different way to bring services and messages to the community



Everyone enjoys a good talanoa session. From 26-28th May, some of the funniest talent in Fiji, the Bata Ni Tanoa boys, joined with the Health Ministry to bring key messages to the community through talanoa, competitions, and of course jokes, at the Northern FBC Roadshow. This initiative was supported by UNICEF, with a hand (or 8) from Colgate-Palmolive's Handy the Octopus, who helped distribute soap, skipping ropes, and health promotion materials. A vigorous team of seven staff from Labasa powered the Wellness Bus alongside the FBC team to provide wellness screenings and health advice. “This is the first time we've ever done something like this,” said one of the staff members, “it's very good that we were able to use the bus this way to get the community involved.”

The Mobile Medical Bus had a successful 2016 debut, screening 225 people and reaching about 1,880 civilians within 20 stops. The team made their way through Nabouwalu, Dreketi, Savusavu, Lomaloma Village, and Seqaqa before closing in Labasa. Due to the rates of preventable communicable illnesses in the area, the main health focus was on hand washing. Proper hand washing demonstrations were conducted on the trail, along with ways to use water safely if there is a shortage. The FBC Roadshow was a successful mix of fun and lifestyle messaging. Well, the next road show is scheduled for the western division, so stay tuned for more chronicles of our road show!



Say no to smoking

31st May marks World No Tobacco Day and it was commemorated at the TISI Sangam Nursing School in Labasa by the Permanent Secretary for Health & Medical Services Dr Meciusela Tuicakau.

“The true face of tobacco is disease, death and horror, not the glamour and sophistication the pushers in the tobacco industry try to portray”, Dr Tuicakau said.

“The best way to stop smoking is to stop, no ifs and buts”. Dr Tuicakau said that the use of tobacco products only has harmful effects on human health and the best possible way to get rid of these problems is not to engage into the habit of smoking.

The 2010 Fiji Global school based health survey (GSHS) revealed that tobacco use was common with over half the sample, 61% of the students admitted to smoking before the age of 14 years.

Furthermore, statistics have shown that smoking prevalence rate in Fiji remains at 30.8% which has significantly dropped from for 38% until 2011. However, this still raises the alarm for more advocacy and awareness on the deadly impacts of smoking.

Meanwhile the Tobacco unit of the Ministry of Health & Medical Services in collaboration with tobacco manufacturers have resolved to introduce the concept of plain packaging to prohibit the use of logos, colours, brand images and promotional information.

This will enable the reduction of the attractiveness of Tobacco products and address the package design techniques that may suggest that the products are less harmful than the others.

What you should know about plain packaging:

The Guidelines for Implementation of Article 11 (Packaging and labelling of tobacco products) of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) define plain packaging as “measures to restrict or prohibit the use of logos, colours, brand images or promotional information on packaging other than brand names and product names displayed in a standard colour and font style (plain packaging)”.

Where has plain packaging been implemented?

Australia became the first country to fully implement plain packaging in December 2012. Ireland, France and the United Kingdom have passed laws to begin implementing plain packaging from May 2016. (Sell through periods mean that packs will not appear in stores immediately and, in the case of Ireland, implementation may be delayed.)

Eating out healthy -

Highland Natural

We continue to hear people raving about this place in town that serves only plant-based meals which are very tasty and healthy. Highland Natural- the name says it all! Highland Natural is tucked away at the Victoria Arcade in Suva but has become quite popular thanks to the word of mouth marketing that we all resort to here in Fiji when we simply love something!

This family business is managed by Mr Ravuni Uluilakeba. He and his family have been vegetarians for the past 20 years, but the restaurant concept began around 2012 with his mum. "We would come into town and noticed that finding vegetarian meals was hard. You had Indian and Chinese cuisines that were mostly drenched in oil. So we thought, "Why not share what we enjoy and give people an alternative?"

The family first set up a juice bar and sold health products, and later expanded into a sandwich and salad bar. "We developed further based on how customers responded. When you hear vegetarian meals, automatically people think of boring leafy greens. We decided to present plant-based dishes that are tasty and not boring".

Highland Natural sources it supplies from the local market and uses everything natural to stay true to its name. They don't use sugar, dairy, colour, or preservatives. "Natural" is what they try to stick to with the use of sea salt and honey or date syrup to create flavour.

At the moment, food preparation is done in a separate kitchen and they are looking at slowly expanding given the right location. Currently, meals are available as per demand only and because they serve the good stuff, it runs out fast! So next time you are in town, make sure you make it to Highland Naturals slightly before 1pm!

Just like the Ministry of Health & Medical Services continues to advise the public to eat healthy meals and more natural foods, Ravuni vouches for the same. "It is important to eat more plant-based meals than pre-packed or processed meals. We serve salads that are a good mix of greens and proteins including tofu, couscous and legumes. If you are looking at switching to being a vegetarian, start slowly. Launching straight into eating only plant-based meals can prove difficult so take it one at a time".

Highland Natural was soon enough busy with people walking in to grab a healthy meal. If you think plant-based meals are boring, think again and visit this place to taste a healthy and invigorating blend of flavours.

To all those devoted Highland Natural followers, keep an eye out for their new selection soups!

Readers note: The views in this article are of that of the writer and not of the Ministry.



Start a backyard garden!

The Health Ministry encourages the public to invest in backyard vegetable gardens especially with the prevalence of non communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, anaemia, and obesity in the country.

Establishing a vegetable garden in the home settings is cost efficient and will prove beneficial to the family. Not only will this provide a source of fresh vegetables but a form of physical activity as well.

Vegetable gardens will also provide a daily source of vitamins and minerals required by the body.

Home gardens will also allow people to budget and save money that would otherwise be spent groceries and poor food choices.

Due to lack of or limited space, many do not resort to vegetable gardening. However this should not discourage people from planting vegetables in pot plants or buckets.

The Health Ministry has established vegetable gardens at its hospitals and health facilities around the country.



Say cheese! Why we should all smile more.

What do dentist Dr Nania Kau and Mother Teresa have in common? They both believe in the power of a smile! But if that's not enough to put a famous "Bula Smile" on your face, see some of the benefits of smiling below:

1) Smiling makes you happy

Our facial expression doesn't just "show" our mood. It can also "shape" our mood! The act of smiling triggers endorphins in our brains. Endorphins make us feel happy, and they can also help lower our stress levels. Endorphins can even act as a natural painkiller!

2) Smiling makes you more approachable

Smiling is a form of body language which communicate you're open and approachable. When people see you smiling, it puts them at ease and makes them want to be around you, to join the fun. This is true whether you're in a social situation, at work, or even talking to a stranger.

3) Smiles are contagious

The smile challenge: Flash a big smile to the next person you see today. Did they smile back? Most likely yes. The scientific explanation is that when we see someone smiling, our brain tells us to mirror the smile in response. It's one of the clever things our bodies do to help us communicate without even thinking about it.



There is no health without mental health

1. There is stress in everyday life, after a disaster, there is even more pressure on us mentally, emotionally, and physically. It's important to take care of yourself and loved ones.

2. **Complications** – if we ignore mental health, complications can include **anxiety, depression, or negative coping** that can harm us and the people we care about.

3. **What to do?** – **Ask are you OK?** Check in with yourself to make sure you are handling stress well by focusing on what you do well, connecting with people you trust, getting enough rest, and seeking help if you need it. Check in with others, simply ask a friend, “are you OK” and be sure to listen without judgment. Children also need a safe space to communicate...they are people too!

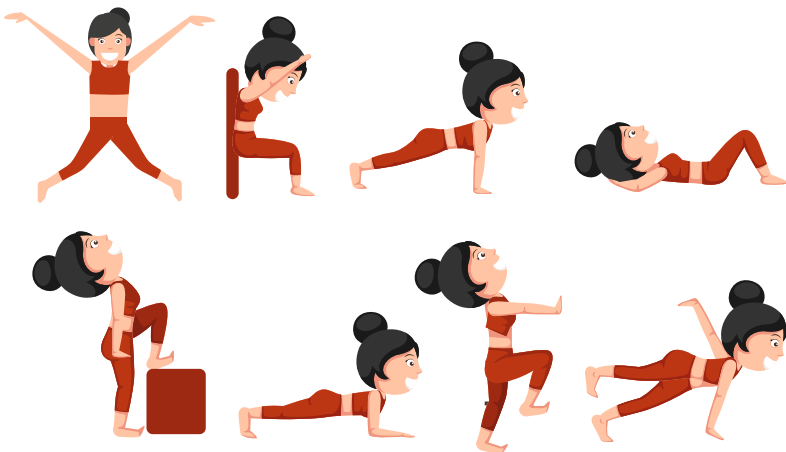
When “I” is replaced with “We”, even Illness becomes Wellness

The 7 Minute Workout

Some of us may feel like we don't have time to exercise, but almost everyone has 7 free minutes a day!

Do each workout for 30 seconds until you reach 7 minutes! You can repeat the set if you're feeling fit, but remember, don't go too hard, too fast.

- 1. Jumping jacks 2. Wall sit 3. Push up 4. Abdominal crunch 5. Step up onto a chair 6. Plank 7. High knees 8. Side plank



Meet our wellness Champion

Name: Shalvin Singh
Age: 27
Occupation: Auditor

What inspired you to get fit? I got inspired towards health and fitness by those healthy people surrounding me. I felt that I personally was not like this during my university days. By the time I started working I gained significant body weight, and I had to come back by means of a healthy diet and regular workouts.

Has fitness always been part of your life? Not until I realised that I was eating an unhealthy diet and had an unhealthy body weight. However, now I can confidently say that fitness is part of my healthy life.

How do you keep workouts interesting? By engaging with group of enthusiastic people at the gym who are always keen to share their diet and workout plans. Working out with such an enthusiastic team also makes my workout interesting, which builds up my motivation to go.

Is there a sportsperson/sports team you admire? Yes. Roger Federer - tennis player.

Personal motto: To get trimmed and have good, visible abs. Maintaining the workout stamina and to remain fit and healthy.



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