

Physical Activity for Older Maori & Pacific People

Programmes Offered, Barriers to Entry, and Recommendations to Overcome these Barriers



Current Programmes

Current

- 3 Gentle Exercise Classes – Sit and Be Fit
- 1 Gym Circuit Class
- Personal Training
- 2 Aquajogging Classes
- Nutrition Sessions



What Works for Maori & Pacific People

- Music – strong beat and rhythm, medium to fast beat. Not too slow! Needs to be lively/fun music
- Use some Pacific and Maori music
- Fun atmosphere
- Group togetherness & feeling of belonging

The instructor must be able to create a fun and enjoyable atmosphere which allows participants to work at their own level of ability.



Barriers to Physical Activity

Cultural Factors

- Historical factors
- Relaxed Lifestyle
- Ignorance/lack of understanding
- Being big is more desirable
- New concept: Take time to come to terms with

Non-Attendance Factors

- Family commitments
- Lack of Transport
- Lack of consistency
- Financial
- Lack of resources for referral follow-up
- Lack of suitable instructors



Historical factors

Fifty years ago when our people were growing up in the Islands:

- They had to work physically harder in everyday tasks eg washing done by hand, had to walk everywhere
- They used a lot of energy therefore needed a lot of fuel (food) for that energy
- People did not think of Physical Activity for leisure, or health & fitness, because of the already physically demanding lifestyle
- There was no thought 'to go for a walk' for exercise or relaxation (there is no concept for this in the Tongan language)



Relaxed Lifestyle

- Unhurried
- No set time
- Meal times vary
- Do it tomorrow
- These contribute to a sedentary lifestyle



Ignorance/Lack of Understanding

- My people will perish for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6)
- Lack of understanding due to lack of knowledge



Being big is more desirable

- Big solid build in size is more desirable
- No concept in Tongan language for losing weight (for good health)
- Historically, someone who lost weight was regarded as being sick or unhealthy
- And vice versa ...



New concept: Take time to come to terms with

- Physical activity for leisure or health is a very new concept, and it will take a very long time for people to make up their mind that they want to do something about it.
- Often better educated people will be more interested



Non-Attendance Factors

- Family commitments
- Lack of transport
- Lack of consistency
- Financial
- Lack of resources for referral follow-up
- Lack of suitable instructors



Family Commitments

- Family for Maori & Pacific people means Extended family
- Early enthusiasm can be influenced by:
 - Looking after grandchildren
 - Looking after sick relatives
 - Funerals
 - Weddings



Lack of Transport

- Many older people do not have a driver's license so need to be collected and returned home
- They are heavily reliant on family members for transport
- Overall, Maori people are more independent than Pacific people



Lack of Consistency Over the Long-term

- Easy to start
- Hard to continue
- Hard to make lifestyle changes to include physical activity on a regular basis



Financial

- No budget in place
- Exercise is not a priority
- Therefore, have a “cannot afford it” mindset



Lack of Resources for Referral Follow-up

- Some people referred by doctors do not start a programme
- Lack of time and resources to follow-up
- Home visits may be necessary



Lack of Suitable Instructors

- Lack of Maori/Pacific instructors
- Lack of instructors for the Community programmes



Recommendations

- Funded exercise programs are needed
- Transport needs to be a part of these funded programs
(otherwise people will not turn up)
- Resources need to be available for follow up of referrals



A Common Message

- Simply saying “exercise for half an hour each day” may not be enough
 - go for a walk, do house work, gardening
- Cannot rely on them to do it on their own
- And it may not be high enough intensity to be beneficial
- They really need to attend a class to get a good workout



Whanau Tautoko has these
programmes in place

