

# HAUORA MANAWA HEART HEALTH

The Community Heart Study

August 2010

## Study Update – Suzanne Pitama

Issue 8

### Kia Ora Koutou,

Both Christchurch and the Wairoa region have had a wetter than usual winter. This often means that all of us have a number of relatively good excuses about why we can't get out to exercise. However over the last two months I have met a lot of really committed Christchurch participants who have maintained their walking, cycling and other physical activities. They have been an inspiration to me and the Hauora Manawa team.

This newsletter we really want to focus on the 'turtle approach' - doing things consistently and over time seeing the results. Most research supports this approach, and shows the most effective way to achieve and maintain good health is by eating right and exercising – over a sustained period of time.

The team has also met a lot of participants who are having difficulty with being able to do things each day to improve their health - if that is you - don't give up! It's never too late to set a new goal and start over –today is good! The turtle approach will ensure that you are able to change your lifestyle and enjoy good health for the rest of your life. Find a friend or whanau member to do it with you, it makes it a lot easier. We hope you enjoy this issue, and encourage you to send in your stories to let us know how you are going. I want to thank Jeff Clark for sharing his story with us this month – he has worked steadily to improve his health over the last 2 yrs and has achieved a great result! Our team has started a biggest loser competition ourselves to ensure we walk the talk. We'll update you with our progress in December.

### Heart To Heart... with Jeff Clark of Christchurch

Recently we caught up with Jeff Clark who is a great example of how simple changes to lifestyle and diet can make a huge difference to overall health, especially when those changes are kept consistent over time.

When we first met Jeff, 60, two years ago, he was already losing weight in an effort to improve his health. Jeff's father had survived a serious heart attack and both of his parents had high cholesterol, so Jeff was not surprised to find out that he also had high cholesterol. He was going very well with the weight loss (at his heaviest he had weighed 104 kg), but when he came to clinic, his results showed that his cholesterol levels were still quite high. Jeff realised then that there were more things he could do to improve his health. "I wasn't doing well enough so it was quite a kick in the backside to get me going again and to try harder to get my weight and cholesterol down and to get myself, in a safe way, to live a longer life".

As you can see from the photos, Jeff has worked hard over the last 2 years to bring his weight down and improve his health. In addition to his original weight loss, Jeff has lost a further 10 kg since the first clinic in 2008. The results from his 2<sup>nd</sup> yr follow up tests have also shown a marked decrease in cholesterol levels. When asked how he'd achieved such great results, Jeff said "I realised I had to look at what I was eating a lot more". He says that although he had increased his exercise levels, he was still eating much the same. Jeff admits



Jeff in 2008



Jeff in 2010

that at first, he struggled to give up some of his favourite foods, but as time went on he started to enjoy eating healthily and says that now he doesn't have many bad days at all. "I don't suffer. I enjoy the food I eat but I take it one day at a time and if I fall off the wagon, I just get back on".

When asked the most important thing he has learned on his journey to better health, Jeff said "for me, exercise and diet go together. I can't successfully do one without the other. When I exercise more, I feel stronger about choosing the right foods and when I'm eating well, I tend to exercise more". While it might not be a magical quick fix, it is certainly sound advice – and Jeff is living proof that the best way to lose weight safely and permanently is to do it slowly and sensibly, and to take it one day at a time.

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### WIN

If you'd like a new cookbook, or exercise and lifestyle book, or even just a great book to read while you take time out to relax, then we have a \$50 booksellers voucher to give away. Just let us know that you'd like to enter our Lucky Draw!

Please let us know if you've changed address or need to update your contact details

### Contact Us:

Hauora Manawa  
The Community Heart  
Study  
Maori Indigenous Health  
Institute  
University of Otago,  
Christchurch  
PO Box 4345  
Christchurch

**Free Phone:**  
0800 HAUORA  
(0800 428672)

If you'd like a question answered in the newsletter or have a healthy recipe, success story or photo you'd like to share, please email these to: [miriam.esteves@otago.ac.nz](mailto:miriam.esteves@otago.ac.nz)



# In The News

## It's Never Too Late to Make Lifestyle Changes to Improve Your Heart Health!

One of the ideals of our modern society is that we stay looking younger for longer, and while pining for our lost youth is not productive, keeping fit, healthy and feeling youthful is a positive goal to have at any age.

Once we hit our 30's and 40's, most of us start to notice that we need to work a little harder to maintain fitness and good health. As we get older it is important to remember that what kept us fit and in shape in our 20's, probably won't work for us in our 40's. It's also important to accept that, regardless of fitness level or appearances, a 40 yr old body is not, and never will be a 20 yr old body! But no matter what age you are or fitness level you're at, there are things you can do to help improve your heart health



Vicky Cameron



Allamanda Faatoese

*and* keep you looking and feeling younger for longer.

If we think of aging as wear and tear instead of just a chronological number, then it makes sense that we'd want to avoid the things that cause the most wear and tear on our bodies – carrying extra weight, having high blood pressure, smoking, alcohol and drug abuse etc. If we want to reduce the signs of aging and improve our heart health, then we should be doing things that reduce or prevent wear and tear on our bodies – eating well keeping fit, and avoiding stress.

If you've decided to make a change, great! Remember it's never too late to make lifestyle changes to improve your heart

health.

Here's what you can expect if you make the following changes:

**\*Don't smoke** Within a year of quitting, your excess heart disease risk is halved, and former smokers live longer than current smokers whatever age they stop smoking.

**\*Regular Exercise** Even taking up exercise in your 50's reduces total mortality. After 10 years your life expectancy is the same as someone who has been physically active all their life.

**\*Healthy Eating** Take a second look at what you eat. The National Heart Foundation Website has a publication called "A Guide to Heart Healthy Eating". You can download or request a copy to be sent, by visiting their website: <http://www.nhf.org.nz>

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### Tips For Getting The Most Out Of Your Exercise Routine

**\*Keep Moving** You should aim to be active for at least 30 minutes but if you are just starting out, you might find that 30 minutes of sustained physical activity is just too much at first. If you need to take a breather during a workout, try to keep some part of your body moving while you catch your breath, for example you could march on the spot or do arm raises. If you are a brave soul and have taken up jogging you can alternate running and walking between lamp posts. This helps keep your body in "workout" mode even while you are catching your breath. If you stick at it you will notice that you need to take less breaks as you gradually build up your fitness and stamina.

**\*Keep things Simple** While joining a gym or buying exercise equipment works well for a lot of people, it's important to remember that you don't have to spend a lot of money to get fit. Walking, jogging, and skipping cost you nothing but your time and they require minimal equipment – mostly just comfortable clothing and footwear. If you prefer to exercise at home, you can build an effective exercise routine by looking for suitable exercises online. Whatever you do, listening to music while you exercise will help keep you moving, and having an exercise buddy can help make exercising more fun while also giving you support and accountability.

**\*Be Kind to Yourself** If you haven't exercised for a while and are carrying extra weight it's really important that you start out slowly to avoid injury. Work at your own pace and don't compare yourself or your ability to others- even a slim, fit person would tire quickly if they had to carry an extra 10 kg (or more!) load while exercising! It's always a good idea to check with your doctor before starting on a new exercise regime – they will be able to give you advice on the best way to get back on track safely.

#### A note for our Christchurch Participants from Karen Tikao-Mason, Study Coordinator

We are really pleased with the response we have had for our second year follow up checks and it has been wonderful to catch up with every one that we've seen so far. There are a few participants we have not heard back from yet and we are trying very hard to contact those people by phone. If this is unsuccessful, we plan to start home visits to check if the address details we have on file are correct. If you haven't booked your 2<sup>nd</sup> year follow up appointment, please call us as soon as possible on the following numbers: Clara Ann 364 3610, Naomi 364 3689, or free phone 0800 428672.