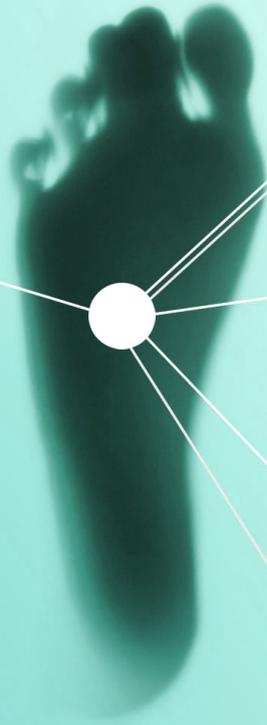


Diabetes and the Seven Dimensions of Wellness



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The
10,000 TOES
Campaign

Diabetes and the Seven Dimensions of Wellness

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes has been defined as a chronic and metabolic disease that is characterised by high blood glucose (sugar) levels. There are two types of diabetes, Type 1 diabetes which used to be known as insulin-dependent diabetes where the pancreas produces little to no insulin. People with Type 1 diabetes need to take insulin for the rest of their lives. Whereas Type 2 diabetes, the most common type of diabetes and usually found among adults, occurs when the body develops a resistance to insulin or makes insufficient insulin (Diabetes Australia, 2021; World Health Organisation, 2021)

Prevalence of Diabetes

Globally there are about 422 million people who have diabetes. A majority of these people live in low- and middle-income countries. Every year 1.6 million people die from diabetic complications each year. The prevalence of diabetes has been increasing in recent decades (World Health Organisation, 2021).



The following statistics show the extent of diabetes within certain Pacific Island Nations as follows:

- **In PNG**, the prevalence of diabetes in adults is 15.4% with total cases being 713,500
- **In Fiji**, the prevalence of diabetes in adults is 15.1% with total cases being 87,000
- **In Tonga**, the prevalence of diabetes in adults is 13.1% with total cases being 7,600

(International Diabetes Federation, 2021)



Complications of Diabetes

Diabetic long-term complications develop over time, especially if blood sugar levels are not well controlled and is frequently high. Complications include: Cardiovascular disease (significant increase in risk), damage to kidneys, eyes, feet and nerves, infections on the skin, hearing impairment, Alzheimer's disease, and depression (Mayo Clinic, 2021).

Preventing and Managing Diabetes from a 7 Dimensions of Wellness Perspective

What can you do to prevent and manage diabetes from a wellness perspective? The following section will explain wellness strategies under the seven dimensions of wellness.



Day 1- Physical:

Our physical health is so important in caring for diabetes. Lifestyle management is still the number one treatment of all chronic conditions, like diabetes. Let us look at the different strategies in caring for our health within the physical dimension of health.

These strategies can be used to prevent diabetes from developing or manage diabetes if you already have it

- **Diet:** *Eat plenty of whole foods that contain high fibre and are low in fat. Aim for a diet that uses whole food vegetables such as taro, cassava, sago, whole grains such as brown rice, and fruits such as papaya, mangoes and watermelon. You can also eat as much non-starchy vegetables such as lettuce, cabbage, or taro leaves as you like. They will have little or no effect on your blood sugars. Try to eat as many different kinds of non-starchy vegetables to ensure your diet is full of phytonutrients, vitamins, and minerals. These foods help to keep blood sugars low and promote a healthy functioning body. Avoid refined foods such as white rice, biscuits, sweets, and packet noodles as these cause your blood sugar to rise and have limited nutritional value. Limit tin fish, if possible, especially tinned fish in oil.*



- **Limit or stop alcohol intake.**
- **Exercise:** *Be more physically active. Exercise for about 30 minutes at least five days per week to maintain a healthy weight, and up to 60 mins if wanting to lose weight. Walking, or if you are feeling more energetic, jogging, or swimming, are great ways of being physically active. Physical activity helps to reduce insulin resistance in Type 2 diabetes and aids in managing sugar levels in people with Type 1 diabetes.*



- **Lose weight:** *If you are overweight, then losing weight can reduce the risk of developing diabetes, and improve control drastically if you already have it. By eating a healthy diet and exercising, you can lose weight.*

(Based on the recommendations of Better Health Channel, 2020, and the Mayo Clinic, 2021)

Discussion:

- *What are some of the barriers people experience to eating healthy food or being physically active?*
- *How can we be more physically active every day, and what things can you do to help get you motivated, or keep you motivated?*
- *Do you have an accountability partner, someone who can help and support you as you make changes to what you eat or how you move? Perhaps you could be an accountability partner to others who would benefit from your support.*

N/B: It would be good to stand up and move around the room, aim to do this every 20-30 mins, remember to 'stand up and move more!'



Day 2 - Emotional:

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is something we all need when making decisions about our health. At times, when we aren't feeling well or are challenged mentally, our EQ may not be working at it's best. This can affect our ability to make wise decisions, as we are more likely to be led by our emotions during times of stress. Initiating or maintaining positive lifestyle changes can be difficult and very stressful, and we may need support to manage at these times.

Discussion 1:

Now take this time to evaluate your feelings about diabetes. Think of the way diabetes can affect a life. There may be a need to take medication every day – tablets or injections. There may be a need to check blood sugar levels frequently; this involves needing to prick a finger to get a drop of blood for testing.

- *What about the complications from diabetes that may occur? Complications such as kidney damage, nerve damage affecting the feet, hands etc, loss of eyesight, heart problems even heart attacks, slow healing wounds especially on the toes/feet/legs. As you can see diabetes is a serious condition.*



If you are living with a chronic condition like diabetes is there someone you can turn to who will support, you as you manage this condition or other stressful situations caused by physical illness? Perhaps you are the person that family or a friend can turn to during these times.

How can you go about helping others, or yourself to maintain emotional wellness?



Discussion 2:

- *Make a list of the things that make you happy, think of ways to incorporate these into your daily life and routine. Even taking the time to recall these things can be good for your health. Share with someone the list you have made, and what you can do to make these happen.*



Day 3 - Social:

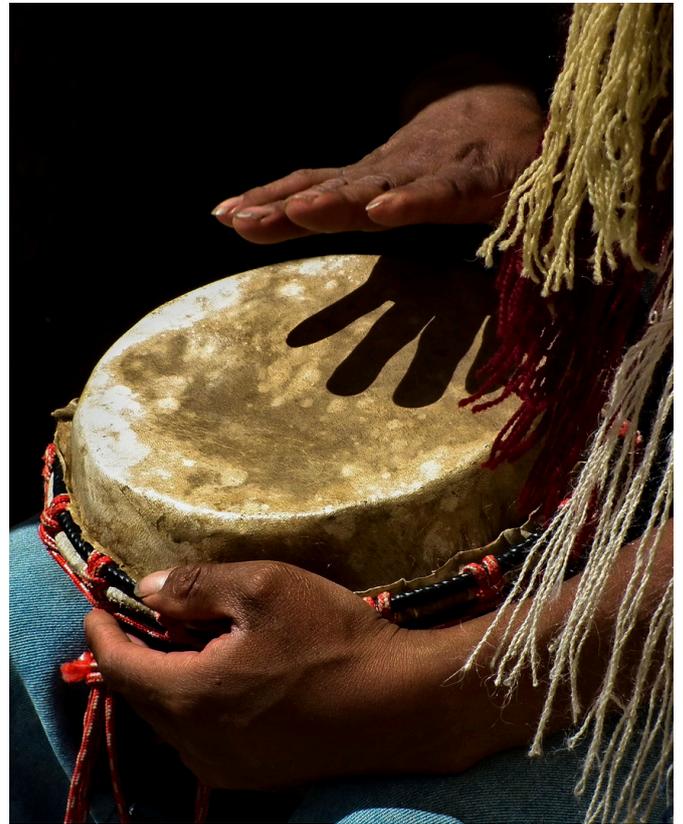
When we have healthy interactions with others, we are building a great foundation to becoming socially well. This is especially so when we eat healthy foods and do physical activity with family and friends.

Eating well and being physically active with others can be a strong motivator to maintain healthy lifestyle changes, especially if those we socialise with are also choosing to eat healthy foods and exercise regularly. Goals can be set among family or friends to lose a certain amount of weight or eat certain foods at particular mealtimes. You can also set exercise goals and reward yourself for achieving the goal.

Discussion 1:

- *How can our interactions with others improve our wellbeing?*
- *Are there challenges that come with interacting with family and friends, especially when sharing food or being active?*
- *What are the positive things we can do to ensure our social interactions remain healthy and uplifting?*

Growing wonderful vegetables and fruit in your gardens is a wonderful way of providing healthy and nutritious food for you and your family. It can also be a wonderful way to get the whole family involved in the healthy interactions that come from working with the earth, each other, and learning new skills (or teaching them to others). Gardening is also one of the best forms of physical activity that help maintain weight, improve vascular flow, strengthen muscles, and improve our wellbeing. It can help with managing chronic conditions like diabetes as well.



Discussion 2:

- *Is there somewhere in your community that you can start a community garden, where all the church can help to maintain and grow healthy food?*
- *How hard or easy would it be to create a space where everyone and anyone can interact with others, while growing delicious food to eat? What are the things you need to start this process, who are the people you can call on to help?*





Day 4 - Vocational:

For many of us our being able to work each day is a great blessing, especially in these times. Your job plays an important role in your daily life, and we spend many hours a day doing it. Planning your workday plays an important role in being able to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Here are some suggestions on how you can plan your day to improve your health and wellbeing.

Choose to move around during work. Sitting too long without moving will add to the risk of developing cardiovascular disease and can contribute the added risk of chronic conditions like diabetes. If you have a job that requires



a lot of sitting, make sure you stand up and move around every 30 mins. This will not only prevent heart disease or diabetes but will also help to prevent other health issues such as musculoskeletal problems like back pain and arthritis.

Make yourself a healthy lunch to take each day, consider getting your daily lunches ready the night before, or even packed for each day of the week and left in the fridge ready to go.

When talking on the phone stand up and move around or consider a “standing” meeting instead of sitting down.

Be supportive of others at your workplace, who are also trying to make or maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Discussion:

- *What are the ways you can plan your work-days to include healthy lifestyle behaviours? Think about sitting less, drinking more water, having a positive attitude. What will you do?*
- *If you aren't at work, planning your day is still very important in keeping to a healthy lifestyle. Whether you work or stay at home, perhaps you can create a routine for your day and see if you can keep to it over the coming weeks – you never know some things will probably become good habits.*
- *Share this with someone to help you stay accountable.*



Day 5 -Environmental:

What we surround ourselves in, is something many of us don't put a lot of thought into. But having an uplifting environment can be one of the best and most satisfying things you can do for your health – especially if you are living with a chronic condition like diabetes. It doesn't always take a lot of time or money to accomplish and can be as easy as going outside. There are many things that improve our mood by being outside; sunshine, greenery, blue sky, beaches, nature's sounds, and fresh air are but a few.

Choose to exercise outside in the sunshine and fresh air. This will do wonders for your mood and make you feel better as you allow your skin to soak up the sun. It's a good idea to exercise outside either early in the morning or late afternoon, to avoid the hotter parts of the day. Walking among the trees, flowers, and plants

will help you feel happy and peaceful. Feeling good while exercising will help you keep to your physical activity program. The “feelings” you experience from physical activity will keep you wanting to do more exercise every day.

If you are not able to go outside due to poor weather or other circumstances, then do your best to ensure your indoor environments are uplifting and healthy as well. Look around your home or office and see what you can do to make it welcoming and inviting. Is there clutter that can be removed? Is there mould or other things that can be cleaned? Are there drafts that can be blocked? How about a vase of flowers from the garden, or a scented candle? There are so many things that can help create a healthy and uplifting environment.



Discussion:

- *Where is it that you can go for some physical activity that will be uplifting and good for your mood?*
- *Have you ever considered getting up early in the morning to see a sunrise? Plan to do this with someone, go together or meet them there, and choose somewhere beautiful or special to watch the sunrise? Where will you go? Who can you go with? Plan this now, then do it.*
- *Thinking of your work or home environment, make a list of things you can do to help create the environment you want. Share what you are planning to do with those around you or the people you live with, they may have other great ideas to share as well.*



Day 6 - Intellectual:

“Knowledge it like a garden, if it is not cultivated it is not harvested”

There are many positive things that come from learning more about good lifestyle habits or lifestyle illness and diseases.

When we improve our knowledge on any topic, we “exercise” our brain and mind, creating new pathways to, and memories of what we learn. Then when we need that information, we can make good decisions based on what we have learned, and we are less likely to make decisions based on how we “feel” at the time.

Being able to make wise decisions is especially important when living with Diabetes or other chronic diseases. It can result in us living a long and healthy life, where we are able to see our families grow up and have families of their own, and are able to maintain friendships that last a lifetime.

Discussion 1:

- *Think about the positive benefits that come through learning of the diabetes prevention and management strategies that we have discussed already. Share with someone and answer the following questions together:*
- *What is something new I have learned this week?*
- *What is something I can apply to my life right now?*
- *What is something I am going to share with someone who may benefit from it?*

Discussion 2:

- *Who are the important people in your life that give you a reason to live a healthy lifestyle? Why is it important that you are able to live a long and healthy life?*



Day 7 - Spiritual:

Having a healthy relationship with God is vitally important to our overall health, and is especially key to being spiritually healthy. Our relationship with God adds meaning to our lives, gives us purpose, and helps connect us to others in a loving and significant way. When others see a loving God living in us this opens avenues for them to come to know and love Him as we do. What a great testimony we can be.

Discussion 1:

- *Our lifestyles can be hugely influential on those that we work and mingle with each day. How we care for our bodies in what we eat, drink, or do is being watched and can have a profound effect on others looking on. Thinking about your life journey and your relationship with God, what are the ways you can add meaning to your life and others through following a healthy lifestyle? What are the positives to your spiritual health that can come from managing diabetes, either for yourself or through helping others?*



Discussion 2:

- *We all know that our bodies are the place where the Holy Spirit dwells and is often referred to as a "temple". The Bible verse: "So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31) is one we use regularly, what does it mean to you as a follower of Christ?*
- *Perhaps you can make a commitment to yourself that you will be careful with what you eat, drink, and other activities so you will glorify God through your healthy choices. Ask God to help you to have the willpower and understanding to make good choices on what you eat, drink, and do.*



God bless you as you plan to make changes to your lifestyle to include these seven dimensions of wellness to prevent or manage diabetes.



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