

## **Minister's speech on NCDs for National Healthy Lifestyle Week 2011**

This week (starting 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> November) commemorates Samoa's collective efforts in controlling the increasing rates of Lifestyle Diseases by promoting Good Health. It is of national concern that diseases such as Diabetes, High Blood Pressure, Heart Diseases, Cancers, Kidney Diseases and Gout continue to increase in Samoa.

This Annual National Health Event aims to continually raise health consciousness on Lifestyle Diseases that claims the lives of many people in Samoa as around the world. Raising awareness for the promotion of good health and well being represents an ideal opportunity to draw public attention to the risk factors, sign and symptoms, and complications associated with unhealthy lifestyles. Raising health consciousness and health awareness contribute to intensifying efforts to reverse and reduce the burden of lifestyle diseases and taking serious consideration for **'Prevention'** as key factor for investment in good health.

Non Communicable Diseases and conditions, including obesity, diabetes, heart diseases, high blood pressure, strokes and cancer, are a top health priority in Samoa. The prevalence of these diseases is high and increasing; obesity is currently 52.7%, diabetes 23.3% and high blood pressure 21.4%. Non Communicable diseases are now appearing in younger age groups and complications from these diseases are more common.

The number of overweight and obese school children in Samoa is increasing from 1.4% for boys and 2% for girls in 1982 to 3.3% and 14.3% respectively in 2003. Anemia is also a problem for children in Samoa with 10% of children 5-12 years and 21% of adolescents 13-19 years anemic.

The Ministry of Health continues to coordinate the many advocacies for healthy public policies, creating supportive environments, reorienting health services and mobilizing communities and individuals to take actions.

The range of programs initiated and implemented by the Health and its Sector partners have been compliment by the increasing collaboration among Government Ministries, NGOs, Religious Organisations and the community at large.

I would like to congratulate the efforts of several organizations through their hard work and determination in creating an active environment for our people to combat the adverse effect of Non Communicable diseases.

1. The 181 community organizations all over Samoa who are actively participating in the physical activity program. This is very much your own efforts for yourselves
2. All the 41 workplaces currently involved in the 6 months long physical activity program ongoing government and private sectors, have shown determination through being physically active and also enforcing healthy food practices.
3. The health professionals initiative of 3 years that involve after hours soccer games for all of government work colleagues,
4. The National University of Samoa with their soccer competition, starting this year bringing in different organizations to enjoy and become physically active.
5. The Samoa Parliamentary Advocacy Group for Healthy Living (SPAGHL) in leading the Whole of Government, Whole of Country integrated healthy living program, encouraging parliamentarians and heads of government organizations to lead in the efforts to reverse the negative NCD problems of Samoa. Their latest decision to focus on childhood obesity is a bonus.
6. The Women in Leadership Advocates (WINLA) for health targeting working women and continually advocating for a reverse in women obesity.

7. The Australian High Commission in Collaboration with the government of Samoa's monthly "Gday fun run/ walk" which started last Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> November.
8. And the many other organizations who are implementing activities for the benefit of our people's health.

On this special week, I would like for all of us to remember the preventable misfortunes of loved ones who died due to Lifestyle Diseases. I would also urge for all of us to look at our future generation, our children and grandchildren and now on healthy decision to protect them from this fate. Make health promotion and to promoting of healthy lifestyles as a normal way of life.

This is no question about the power of collective responsibility for our overall health. The solutions to our health problems are in our own hands. We can do it ourselves by making our healthy choices early in life, making the challenge easy, exciting and enjoyable everywhere.

I encourage us all to use the Healthy Lifestyle Week to make the changes in our lifestyles, And let us enjoy the benefits!

Concluding my remarks, I would like to invite all people living closer to town, workplaces, family and friends to participate in aerobics sessions that will be conducted by the Ministry fo Health starting Monday 14<sup>th</sup> – Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2011 at 5-6pm. On Friday, will be a half day for all government organizations to make healthy lifestyle initiations whether in sports, workshops, and other activities that promote health and happy environments

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