

PRESS RELEASE

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VI Encouraged to Make Small Health Changes for Lasting Wellness

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The Ministry of Health and Social Development is encouraging residents to make small, intentional changes to improve their health and productivity as the Territory joins the region in observing Caribbean Wellness Day.

Caribbean Wellness Day is observed annually on the second Saturday in September as part of the region's response to non-communicable diseases (NCDs). This year continues under the regional theme *Engage. Empower. Elevate* and the slogan "Our Mind. Our Body. Our Wellness. Empowering Caribbean Youth."

Public Health Officer, Ms. Renee Leonard, said wellness does not have to begin with drastic lifestyle changes. "Start small and start from where you are," Ms. Leonard said. "Investing just 10 to 20 minutes each day in something that elevates your mind, body and overall wellness can create long-lasting impact. The important thing is to start and then build from there."

Physical activity is one area where small, consistent changes can contribute to better health. Adults are encouraged to work toward at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week, while reducing extended periods of sitting and sedentary behaviour.

Ms. Leonard said finding additional opportunities to move throughout the day can make achieving that target more manageable. "Take the stairs, park a little farther away, walk during part of your lunch break, get up and move between tasks, walk while talking on the telephone or take a 10-minute walk when you get home," she said. "Physical activity does not always have to mean going to the gym. Those extra steps add up."

CARPHA is reinforcing this message through its "In a Sneakers" campaign under the call "Move More. Sit Less. Get In Sneakers." The initiative encourages people to intentionally incorporate more movement into their everyday routines.

This year's Caribbean Wellness Day observance also highlights mental and emotional wellbeing, healthy eating, physical activity and reducing harmful behaviours such as vaping, smoking and excessive alcohol consumption.

The observance also provides an opportunity to recognise the wider determinants of health. Health is influenced not only by individual choices, but also by the conditions in which people live, learn, work and age. Access to nutritious foods, safe spaces for physical activity, education, healthcare, supportive relationships and healthy workplaces all influence a person's ability to achieve and maintain good health.

Ms. Leonard said creating a healthier Virgin Islands will therefore require both personal responsibility and environments that support healthier choices.

"We do not have to wait until something is wrong to begin investing in our health," she said. "Start where you are. Choose one thing you can do differently today and build on it. Small, consistent changes can produce significant results over time."

The Ministry of Health and Social Development encourages residents to use Caribbean Wellness Day as a starting point to move more, sit less, eat better, protect their mental wellbeing and make wellness part of everyday life.

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