

He Kupu mō ngā Kitenga Rangahau Research Findings Brief

HEALTHIER
LIVES

He Oranga Hauora

National
SCIENCE
Challenges



Oire Tokoroa Family Diabetes Lifestyle Programme

Key points

- In 2018, the prevalence of type 2 diabetes amongst Pacific Peoples living in Aotearoa New Zealand was 15%. Modelling predicts that this could increase to 25% by 2040!¹ Slowing and reversing this trajectory must be a priority.
- Pacific families make up the nucleus of their communities and often determine how communities operate collectively, so a family-centered approach to the prevention and management of type 2 diabetes was seen as promising.
- The Oire Tokoroa Family Diabetes Lifestyle Programme was co-designed by researchers, a community health provider and study participants, and trialled for six months in the rural community of Tokoroa.
- This programme acknowledged the central role of vaevaeorooro (family champions) in supporting Pacific families. It built on an earlier model – the Pacific Prediabetes Youth Empowerment Programme (PPYEP)² – which used a community-centred approach to develop leadership and advocacy to make healthy lifestyle changes.
- The Oire Tokoroa programme included: empowerment training; co-development of a cookbook using Pacific flavours; weekly delivery of foodbags; support for families to undertake fun exercise activities together; and information about type 2 diabetes from Pacific professionals.
- This culturally relevant programme increased community cohesion and support while enhancing the capacity of Pacific families to support their own family members living with type 2 diabetes and prevent others from developing the disease.

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PROJECT TIMELINE

February 2021 – May 2023

¹PWC NZ, Diabetes New Zealand, Edgar Diabetes and Obesity Research Centre, Healthier Lives National Science Challenge. The Economic and Social Cost of Type 2 Diabetes, February 2021.

²Research Findings Brief He Kupu mō ngā Kitenga Rangahau: Empowering Pasifika youth to be health advocacy leaders, Long-Term Conditions Partnership 2022.



**Vaevaeorooro
(family champions) have
a central role in Pacific
families, which in turn make
up the nucleus of Pacific
communities.**



**We co-designed a
family-centred programme
to improve the prevention
and management of type 2
diabetes in a rural
Pacific community.**



**The programme
impacted positively on
family cohesion and many
aspects of daily life, from
health to education and
employment.**

What did we do?

A community-based researcher was employed to coordinate empowerment training sessions (adapted from PPYEP modules) to build the knowledge and leadership skills of twenty vaevaerooro, who went on to become the driving force behind their family actions to prevent diabetes.

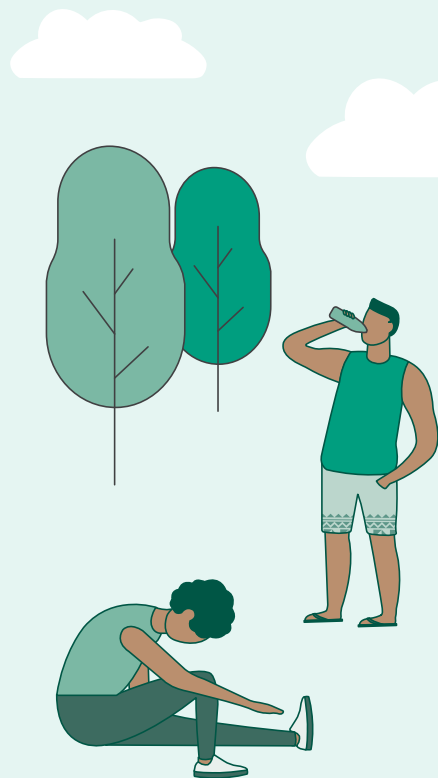
To facilitate cooking and eating meals together, family groups co-created the Kai Tari Cookbook, an intergenerationally-friendly cookbook with culturally appropriate and dietitian-reviewed recipes, and a monthly food plan. One of the vaevaerooro led a cooking demonstration at a local Healthcare Expo using the cookbook.

Over a 16-week period, families were provided with Kai Tari food bags containing the ingredients for four family meals each week.

Family exercise activities were developed and led by vaevaerooro, along with exercise cards to assist families to undertake physical activities at home.

Vaevaerooro used social media platforms to share meal preparation tips and organise fun activity nights with other families.

At a Family Information Day and final talanoa, the community received input from Pacific diabetes professionals and reflected on the study findings.



What did we find?

- The programme impacted positively on every aspect of daily life, including increased availability of food, better nutrition, improved literacy, more physical activity, new budgeting skills, closer family and community ties, and even on-going employment.
- Families improved their nutrition and budgeting knowledge and learnt new ways to prepare healthy meals.
- Children helped with meal preparation and improved their literacy skills through reading recipes.
- Doing things together was hugely valued by busy families.

What did we achieve?

The local supermarket agreed to stock the food needed for the recipes, leading to new food items becoming available to the whole community.

After the programme finished, families continued to meet with other families they had developed connections with and they continued to use the Kai Tari Cookbook, which is being reprinted to meet demand from other communities that have heard about it.

Families gained a better understanding of type 2 diabetes, which resulted in more support being provided to those living with the disease.

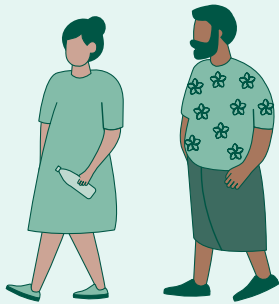
Why does it matter?

Type 2 diabetes is a progressive condition that can lead to serious complications, including heart disease, stroke, blindness, and limb amputations. At least 70% of type 2 diabetes cases globally can be attributed to dietary factors. Programmes which help prevent type 2 diabetes can save lives, protect livelihoods, and decrease healthcare costs.



Community partner perspective

“The vaevaeorooro continue to make healthy choices today. We did have one of our vaevaeorooro who...liked fizzy drinks prior to joining the programme. [She] joined the programme...and today still drinks water, still provides her family with water...and her children still make meals from the Kai Tari cookbook.”



Vaevaeorooro perspectives

“...if this gets us together and going ‘Hey son, how was your day?’, ‘Good, how was your day?’ That’s the kind of conversation we would have because we don’t have any other time to say it, we all just work. I think we like that little time when we could sit with them...”

“The [Kai Tari Cookbook] is marvellous. Also have my daughter-in-law that lives with us, who’s not really a cook. With that book...she’s quite confident that she’s a cook now. That’s also helped her to navigate her way around using ingredients and ingredients that she wouldn’t think that she would like.”

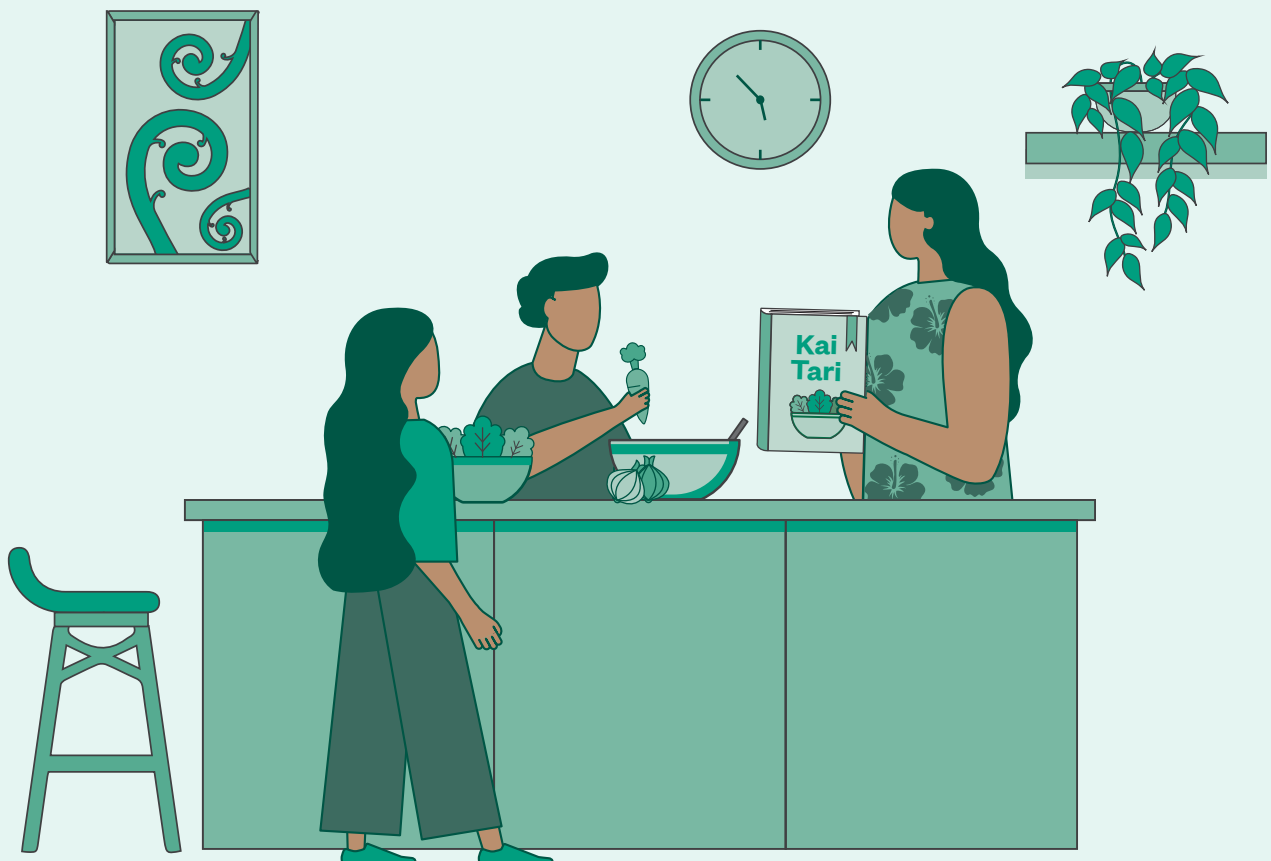
“Doing it [exercise] as a family helps, because it helps with accountability, and doing community physical activities makes it easier to do too.”

“For me personally, it wasn’t even about the exercise. It was about me spending time with the kids. Sometimes I don’t balance my life very well. I work a lot more than I do being at home with my children. I think being able to go on a walk and listen to them tell me about their day really meant a lot.”

Next steps

The family-centred empowerment model used in the Oire Tokoroa programme has subsequently been adapted for use in other communities, such as in the Fanau Manuia Health Promotion Programme (funded by A Better Start National Science Challenge).

Longer-term interventions using this family-centred empowerment model are required to detect meaningful changes in predictors of type 2 diabetes.



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Our vision is of Aotearoa New Zealand with equitable health outcomes and a substantially reduced burden of non-communicable diseases.

Tō mātou kitenga kia noho a Aotearoa New Zealand hei whenua he ōrite ngā putanga hua hauora mō te tangata, kia iti iho hoki ngā pūkauranga o ngā māuiui kāore e taea te tuku ki te tangata kē.

The **Healthier Lives – He Oranga Hauora National Science Challenge** is a national collaborative research programme, investigating innovative approaches to the prevention and treatment of four major non-communicable diseases (NCDs) – cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity.

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.healthierlives.co.nz>

<https://www.healthierlivesimplementationnetwork.co.nz/>

Healthier Lives is hosted by the University of Otago, funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and supported by ten Challenge partners.



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