

AROGYA MANTRA - *Just for the Health of It!*

Asians are the fastest growing population in NZ comprising 9.2% of the total population. In 2010, there were 100,350 Indians in Auckland region and this is expected to increase by more than 60% to 167,185 Indians by the year 2026!¹



An Arogya Mantra class in action



Just for the health of it!

Arogya Mantra is a non-profit initiative started up by a group of youth from the health sector with the primary aim to promote a healthy lifestyle amongst South Asian Community (Indians, Sri Lankan, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Nepalese, Afghanistan, Bhutan). The project involves a group of medical, physiotherapy, nutrition and pharmacy students who are committed to addressing the health needs of South Asian people, especially the youth and the increasing elderly population.

“The initiative was born back in 2013, when we were discussing the high cardiovascular disease and diabetes rates for adults in our community as a result of the ‘typical South Asian lifestyle’. As young health professionals we decided that we wanted to address this and the Arogya Mantra classes were formed.”

Arogya Mantra is a vehicle for advocacy aiming to address community needs and improve health outcomes through community empowerment. The classes not only offer a fitness and health component but also aim to educate members through interactive talks with health professionals every month. This way, the health of class members is holistically targeted.

Classes are one hour long, beginning with forty minutes of our dance aerobics creation ‘Bollyaerobics’; followed by twenty minutes of muscle training. English, Hindi, Gujarati and Pubjabi are spoken throughout the classes to diminish language barriers, exercise to Bollywood music helps to tackle cultural barriers and the classes are at times suitable for those working longer hours!

The classes also provide an opportunity to come together as a community and interact with one another. The classes are also free of charge with the option of giving a gold coin donation at each class.

Once a month a guest speaker such as a doctor, physiotherapist, or a dietitian comes to talk about common health problems for the South Asian community; along with workshops from either Diabetes Auckland New Zealand, Kidney Health New Zealand or Breast Screening Aotearoa. Free medical screenings are also carried out once a month by Auckland medical students supervised by registered doctors and nurses. These tests include blood sugar, lipids, BMI, blood pressure check-ups with referrals made to the class members regular GP where needed.

To date, bi-weekly fitness classes and regular health talk shows alternating between Radio Tarana and Humm FM have been completed since late 2013. Due to the popularity of the initiative, classes are now run from from three separate locations - Onehunga, Balmoral and Papatoetoe.



Part of the Arogya Mantra team

For more information please get in touch with the team

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Reference:

1. Mehta S. Health needs assessment of Asian people living in the Auckland region. Auckland: Northern DHB Support Agency; 2012.