GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS

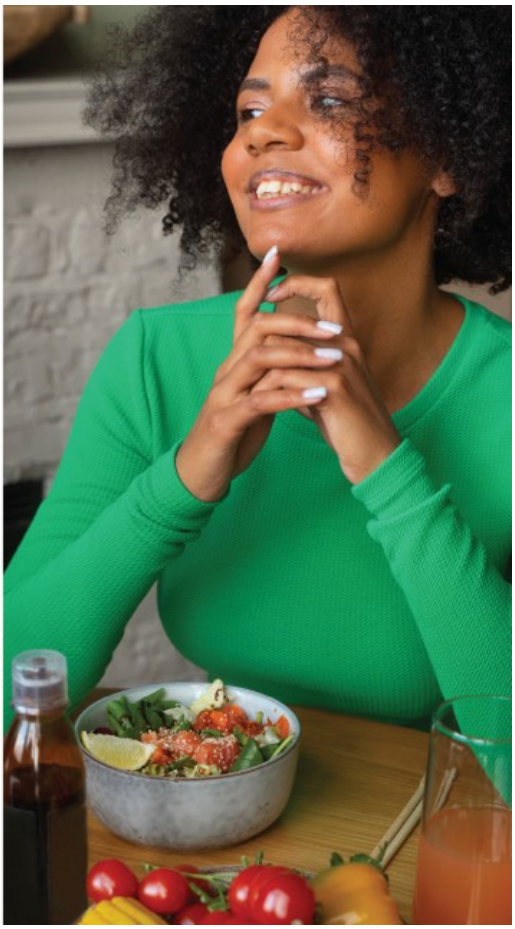
PRESS RELEASE

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Health Minister Encourages Healthy Eating and Active Living for Nutrition Month

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The Ministry of Health and Social Development is encouraging residents across the Virgin Islands to make healthier food choices and adopt active lifestyles as the Territory joins regional partners in observing Caribbean Nutrition Month.

Caribbean Nutrition Month raises awareness about the importance of good nutrition in preventing disease, improving quality of life, and promoting overall well-being. This year's theme, **"Healthy Eating, Active Living: Promoting Caribbean Food as Medicine,"** highlights the powerful role that nutritious local foods can play in supporting health and reducing the burden of chronic disease.

Minister for Health and Social Development, Honourable Vincent O. Wheatley, said the observance comes at a critical time as countries throughout the region continue to experience rising rates of non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, obesity, and certain cancers.

"These illnesses affect not only individuals, but entire families and communities. They impact productivity, increase healthcare costs, and place significant pressure on our healthcare system," Minister Wheatley stated. "The good news is that many of these conditions can be prevented or better managed through healthier lifestyles, proper nutrition, and regular physical activity."

Minister Wheatley also emphasized that nutrition remains one of the most effective tools available to improve population health outcomes and reduce the prevalence of chronic diseases. Healthy eating contributes to stronger immune systems, healthier children, improved mental well-being, increased energy levels, and longer, healthier lives.

As part of the observance, residents are being to incorporate more locally grown and nutrient-rich foods into their diets.

"Food can be medicine," Minister Wheatley noted. "By returning to healthier eating habits and reducing our reliance on highly processed foods that are often high in sugar, sodium, and unhealthy fats, we can take meaningful steps toward improving our health and quality of life."

The Ministry is also encouraging residents to become familiar with and follow the recommendations outlined in the Virgin Islands EatWell Guide, which promotes balanced nutrition and healthy lifestyle practices through practical daily habits.

Small changes can have significant long-term benefits. Practical steps such as filling half the plate with fruits and vegetables, choosing local foods whenever possible, reducing sugary snacks and beverages, lowering salt intake, reducing alcohol consumption, reading nutrition labels, and engaging in at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day can contribute to better health outcomes.

The Ministry of Health and Social Development remains committed to protecting and promoting the health and social well-being of the people of the Virgin Islands through effective policies, sustainable programmes and strategic partnerships that support a safe, healthy, and resilient society.

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