

Te Korowai Whakaruruhau

Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service



December 2024

Kia ora Koutou,

Here we are, December already! As we approach the end of another eventful year, it's time to reflect on our achievements and look forward to taking some well-deserved time off. With the sun shining brighter and the days growing longer, hopefully we can all take the time to relax, recharge, and spend quality time with our loved ones.

This year has been filled with hard work, dedication, and many memorable moments. Now, it's time to unwind and enjoy the simple pleasures that summer brings. Whether you're planning a getaway, indulging in your favourite hobbies, or simply soaking up the sun, we hope you can make the most of this wonderful time of year.

Thank you for being a part of our community. We wish you a joyful and restful summer break, and we look forward to reconnecting in the new year with renewed energy and enthusiasm.

In this issue we look at:

- How humming can make you calmer
- Tips for a safe and healthy summer
- Dates in December
- How to maximise your annual leave
- Whooping Cough epidemic in New Zealand
- Damstra reporting
- Whakatauki



Angus Clark
Associate Director – HSW

How humming can make you calmer

When you hum, vibrations resonate in your chest and throat, stimulating the vagus nerve. This nerve is a major part of the parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for your body's "rest and digest" system. This impressive system counteracts that feeling of "fight or flight" that can be triggered by stress, helping your body to manage its fear response. This further helps to calm us down.

The vagus nerve also helps control important bodily functions such as reducing our heart rate as well as helping with digestion. One small study of 15 singers found that singing, humming and chanting mantras all helped to synchronise the heart's rhythm.

Humming also helps to slow your breathing (and we learned about the benefits of slowing the breath back in a previous newsletter). This helps to signal to the brain and body to switch to a state of calm.

Although the science of the benefits of humming is still emerging, we know that music is hugely beneficial for many areas of cognition and wellbeing.



Humming therapy exercise

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| <p>1. Sit up with a straight back and soft front. Let go of any thoughts of being a good singer and allow notes to come out naturally when you hum.</p> |
| <p>2. Bring yourself to the present moment and notice how your body feels. Start to bring in some of the breathing relaxation techniques we explored in week one.</p> |
| <p>3. Let your jaw and facial muscles relax and note how your breath goes in and out. Take a deep breath in and hum as you breathe out, at your own pace.</p> |
| <p>4. Try closing your eyes to focus on the hum reverberating around your body. You can hum a tune you are familiar with or stay on one note – whatever feels most comfortable to you! Note how your body softens with each hum.</p> |
| <p>5. Keep going for a couple of minutes, or however long feels comfortable.</p> |

(Melissa Hogenboom, *Six Steps to Calm* & Jessica Paton)



Tips for a safe and healthy summer

With the arrival of summer and more time being spent outside, here are some things to do to look after yourself and stay safe.

Sun

Choose and use a good sunscreen:

Do not rely on sunscreen alone – wear a hat and cover your skin.

Protect your eyes:

Wear a hat or UV protective sunglasses and when the sun is strong you could stay inside.

Treat any sunburn:

While a mild sunburn can be treated at home, a severe or blistered sunburn should be checked out and treated by a healthcare professional.

Water

Swimming:

Avoid swimming after heavy rain, check local signage, be aware of strange smells or discolouration of water

Drinking Water Safety:

If you are not on local/council water supply check on the Ministry of Health website for notifications.

Food

The four 'C' rules:

Familiarise yourself with clean, cook, cover and chill

Buy food that is safe:

Check the "use by" date and avoid food with damaged packaging. Rinse all fruits and vegetables.

Road Safety

Wear seat belts:

The easiest measure you and your passengers can take that has a large impact; a three-point seatbelt can half the risk of death in an accident.

Don't get distracted:

Stay focused on the road, if you are tired stop and take a rest.

Follow Road Rules:

Look for changes in traffic, road and weather conditions and watch your speed.

(Healthify, He Puna Waiora)

Dates in December

World Volunteers Day:
6 December 2024

Human Rights Day:
10 December 2024



How to maximise your annual leave

Almost all full-time workers in New Zealand are entitled to four weeks of paid annual leave a year, which is a significant amount of time. When used correctly this time off can reap huge rewards for you both personally and professionally.

To get the most out of your annual leave, it's important that you put some thought into how you're going to spend that time. Make a list of the things you want to do, think about how you will achieve them and put plans in place to ensure none of your valuable time off is wasted.

"Seek: Workplace Wellbeing" offers several suggestions on how you can maximise your annual leave to improve both sides of the work-life equation. These include:

- ✚ Travel: expand your horizons and gain new perspectives.
- ✚ Pamper yourself: step away from work, put it out of your mind and take some time for yourself.
- ✚ Ask yourself: 'how can I unwind and relax?'
- ✚ Log off: you might find that you bring a renewed focus to your work after your 'technology detox'.

Well-planned annual leave leads to more fulfilling time off and more fulfilling time off benefits you both personally and professionally.

To read the whole article and get more ideas checkout [Seek: Workplace Wellbeing 3 May 2023.](#)

Your HSW team

Should you need to contact the University of Auckland's Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team your contacts can be found [here](#)

Whooping Cough Epidemic in New Zealand

Aotearoa New Zealand is in the early stages of a whooping cough (pertussis) epidemic, and it's expected to stick around for up to a year. Babies, especially Māori and Pacific, are most at risk of getting seriously ill.

Spread – highly contagious

Whooping cough spreads easily and can be dangerous for babies. Sadly, last year three babies lost their lives to it, and about half of babies under 12 months who catch it need hospital care.

Risk Review for those working with high-risk groups.

Te Whatu Ora encourage all staff—especially those in healthcare, maternity care, or frontline roles—to keep their vaccinations up to date for whooping cough, flu, and measles.

How you can help:

Vaccinations are the best way to protect yourself, your whānau, and others in our community.

Those eligible for free vaccine:

- **Pregnant people:** Free from 13 weeks (ideally between 16–26 weeks).
- **Babies:** Vaccinations at 6 weeks, 3 months, and 5 months, with boosters at 4 and 11 years.
- **Kids under 18:** All children can get a free vaccine.
- **Adults aged 45 and 65:** Free booster at these ages if eligible.
- **Unimmunised or partially immunised adults (or no record of vaccines)** A funded primary course of 3 doses of Tdap vaccines (at a minimum of 4-week intervals).

Vaccinations are available at **City Campus Pharmacy** they will be able to provide free advice, or you can attend your local health provider.

For those not eligible for free vaccination **City Campus Pharmacy can offer vaccination for \$55.00.**

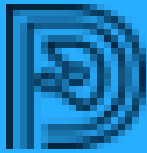
HSW Rep Community of Interest Group (CoI)

The next meeting date will be in 2025 and will be announced on the Community of Interest Teams Channel and in the next.



Request to join the HSW Rep Community of Interest Group via hsw@auckland.ac.nz

Damstra reporting



Triagers end of year preparation should be underway by now: reviewing any outstanding events, especially those not started.

Thank you to all our Triagers, HSW Committees and HSW Reps for all their work this year.

How to report on Damstra has changed with the intranet upgrade. Here is a handy [link for reporting](#). Here are the steps to find Damstra reporting:

1. Open the Staff Intranet
2. Select work and personal
3. Report a safety injury, incident or observation

Below are some definitions to help with reporting:

Report an injury

Any injury to an employee, student, contractor or visitor during the course of work activity.

Report an incident (no injury)

Any unplanned event or occurrence that under slightly different circumstances could have caused harm, injury, ill-health or damage. This category includes any near miss which is defined as an event or situation that could have resulted in injury, illness damage or loss but did not do so due to chance, corrective action or timely intervention.

Report an observation

Report observed safe (positive) or unsafe (hazardous) acts or conditions.

Whakatauki

*Mā roto hoki kia ora
ka pai te kōrero*

If the inner person is refreshed
the conversation will flow

(Māori quotes)

Wishing you all a happy and safe holiday! Merry Kirihimete 🌲 🧊 🎅 🧑🏻 🦌 ❄️