

The NCD Problem

Regional Epidemiological Information

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) cause the majority of premature adult deaths and pose a serious threat to health and development in Caribbean region.

- NCD mortality in the Caribbean is the highest in the Americas.
- On average, people in CARICOM countries have lower life expectancy at birth than those in Central or Latin America, a reversal of the situation that existed 30 to 40 years ago.
- 40% of NCD deaths occur prematurely, in persons under 70.
- Heart attacks, stroke, diabetes and cancer are leading causes of premature death.
- Hypertension is the leading risk factor for death.
- Diabetes prevalence in double global rates.
- According to surveys conducted in 12 CARICOM countries:
 - 10% to 25% of adults have diabetes; and
 - 20% to over 50% suffer from high blood pressure
- In some countries, there are particularly high rates of undiagnosed chronic diseases. For example, 50% of people in Jamaica do not know they have high blood pressure. 20% don't know they have diabetes and some 80% are unaware that they have high cholesterol.
- It is estimated that only 8 of 20 CARICOM countries are on course to meet the World Health Organization target of a 25% reduction in premature NCD mortality by 2025.
- More than 85% of adults in CARICOM Member States do not meet recommended levels of fruit and vegetable intake.

NCDs: Risk factors

4 Diseases, 4 Modifiable Shared Risk Factors				
	Tobacco Use	Unhealthy diets	Physical Inactivity	Harmful Use of Alcohol
Cardio-vascular	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Diabetes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Cancer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Chronic Respiratory	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			



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There are clear gender-based disparities in risk behaviours and the effects of the epidemic

- Women are 60% more likely to have diabetes than men and twice as likely to be obese. Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Dominica, and Jamaica are among the top 14 countries in global female obesity.
- Physical inactivity in women is significantly higher than in men. In Barbados, 9 out of 10 women do not meet World Health Organization activity recommendations. The rate for men is 6 in 10.
- Men have lower rates of health service utilization, worse control of chronic conditions, such as hypertension, and higher death rates from NCDs at every age. For example, men are much more likely to die from cardiovascular disease and diabetes.
- Men have higher rates of harmful use of alcohol than women, with 1 in 5 men reporting binge drinking and 10%-20% of men recorded as current tobacco smokers. Rates of tobacco use and alcohol abuse are half or lower in women.
- In several countries, the detection and control of high blood pressure is consistently worse in men compared to women.

Children are increasingly at risk of developing NCDs

- Childhood obesity exceeds 10% in 7 of 11 countries with data. (24% of girls in the Bahamas are obese)
- This obesity is being driven in part by the increased availability of high fat, high sugar fast foods and sugar sweetened beverages.
- Studies indicate that in every surveyed CARICOM Member State, less than a third of school children aged 13-15 years get the recommended level of physical activity.
- Alcohol use among 13-15 years old exceeds 40% in 11 out of 20 countries, with tobacco use approaching adult rates.

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A broader perspective

- The risk factors and behaviours that contribute to the NCD epidemic take place within particular social, economic and physical environments.
- We need to ensure that these environments help us to live longer, healthier lives and pursue policy, legislative and fiscal arrangements that encourage better health.
- As a region we can, for example:
 - Regulate the marketing and sale of energy-dense nutrient-poor products and sugar-sweetened beverages
 - Raise taxes on tobacco and alcohol to lower consumption and fund NCD interventions
 - Make the Caribbean a trans-fat free and smoke free zone
 - Promote healthy eating and more physical activity in schools
 - Create spaces to promote physical activity like bicycle lanes, run/walk, cycle events, boardwalks and ensure that our built environments enable increased physical activity.

More about:

- [Caribbean Wellness Day](#)
- [Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health](#)
- [Port of Spain Evaluation on Noncommunicable Diseases](#)
- [Caribbean Public Health Agency \(CARPHA\)](#)
- [Healthy Caribbean Coalition \(HCC\)](#)
- [Pan American Health Organization \(PAHO\)](#)