

## FACT SHEET

### Chronic Diseases in the Caribbean *Facts and Figures*

*Caribbean Heads of Government, in response to the heavy burden of Non-Communicable Diseases on the citizens of the region, issued the Port of Spain Declaration in September 2007, "Uniting to Stop the Epidemic of Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases," and declared that the second Saturday in September should be celebrated each year as Caribbean Wellness Day.*

*We invite you to join us on September 12 and help support this initiative.*

#### Chronic diseases and risk factors

- Heart disease, stroke, cancer, and diabetes are the leading causes of illness and premature death in the Caribbean today.
- Most of these illnesses are caused by four modifiable risk factors: tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, and harmful use of alcohol.
- Intermediate risk factors include overweight, obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and high blood sugar.
- Controlling these risk factors could prevent some 80 percent of all heart attacks, strokes, and type 2 diabetes, as well as 40 percent of cancers.

#### Tobacco

- Tobacco is the leading preventable cause of death in the world.
- Tobacco causes two out of 10 deaths in the Caribbean.
- Tobacco is the only consumer product that kills when used as intended by the manufacturer.
- Tobacco kills 50 percent of regular users, half of them between the ages of 35 and 69.

#### Salt

- Excess salt leads to high blood pressure, heart attacks, and strokes.
- People in the Caribbean consume more than twice the amount of salt that is good for them.

- Reducing salt consumption by half could prevent hypertension, strokes, and related illnesses in some 30 million people throughout the Americas.

### **Physical activity**

- Half of people in the Caribbean are “couch potatoes,” i.e., they do no physical activity at all.
- Exercising 30 minutes per day can cut the risk of a heart attack in half.

### **Alcohol**

- Harmful use of alcohol contributes to motor vehicle crashes, domestic violence, mental health problems, and chronic disease.

### **Hypertension and diabetes**

- Hypertension (high blood pressure) is the number-one cause of death in the Caribbean and the world.
- Eight in 10 people with hypertension are not properly monitored or treated.
- More than a third of people with diabetes are unaware they have the disease.
- Three-quarters of people with diabetes die of heart disease or stroke, and 10–20 percent die of kidney failure.

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