

Chronic Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in the Caribbean: THE FACTS

- Globally and in the Caribbean, the chronic diseases of concern are heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases. These are caused by biological factors such as high blood pressure, obesity, high blood sugar and high blood cholesterol.
- In Latin America and the Caribbean, chronic diseases are now the leading cause of premature mortality, accounting for nearly half of all deaths of persons under 70 years, and for two out of three deaths overall.
- The Caribbean is the Region of the Americas worst affected by the epidemic of chronic diseases. The human and economic cost burden of these conditions is not sustainable and could undermine the development of these small, fragile countries.
- Chronic diseases contribute to almost 50 percent of disability-adjusted life years lost in the Caribbean.
- Heart diseases, stroke, cancer, diabetes are the main causes of death in the Caribbean.
- Hypertension is one of the most important risk factor for heart disease and has been shown to affect 22.6%, 25.8% and 27.0% of the population in Jamaica, St. Lucia and Barbados respectively.
- Diabetes prevalence rates in the Caribbean are increasing, and have been reported as 10%.
- Diabetes is a major cause of admissions to hospital, kidney failure, blindness and limb amputations in the Region.
- Obesity and overweight is an ever increasing concern and challenge in almost all Caribbean countries. For example in Barbados 1/3 men and 3/5 of women are overweight, and incidence of obesity for men is 9% and that for women 13.1%.
- Mortality from cancer of the breast in the Caribbean is higher than in the other sub-regions of the Americas. Incidence of breast cancer per 100,000 in the year 2000 was 33.8, and was 32.9 in 2002.
- Estimated incidence of cancer of the cervix in the Caribbean in 2000 was 35.8 with mortality of 16.8 per 100,000, and in 2002 corresponding figures were 32.6 and 16.0 respectively.
- Treatment of hypertension and diabetes in selected Caribbean countries (Bahamas, Jamaica, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago) estimated to consume a range of 1.4 to 8.0 % of Gross Domestic Product for these countries.
- Risk factors of major concern for the Caribbean contributing to the NCDs are obesity, exposure to tobacco smoke, unhealthy diets, physical inactivity and alcohol abuse.



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