



Chronic Diseases in the Caribbean Facts and Figures

Caribbean Heads of Government, in response to the heavy burden of noncommunicable 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.