

Community Action Programme

Adopt Healthy Habits

Context

Obesity has become a serious public health issue in the Region. Of even greater concern is the rise in childhood obesity. According to CARICOM Today, “Statistics show that more than 30% of our Caribbean adolescents are overweight or obese, and (at) risk of developing non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as hypertension, diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular diseases later in life.” Likewise, in Dominica, overweight and obesity are emerging as critical health concerns. Especially troubling is the increasing trend among children and adolescents.

Although there is an urgent need for new data, the information from the 2008 STEPS survey gives credible insight into the levels of obesity and overweight in the population as well as data on the associated risk factors. Data from the STEPS survey (2008) indicate that over 45% of participants between the ages of 15 years and 64 years were either overweight or obese with a prevalence of 60% among females and 30% among males.

The 2009 Global School Health Survey indicated that 10% of adolescents aged 13 to 15 years were overweight while 26.3% were at risk of becoming overweight. Of significance 17.8% of those surveyed ate vegetables one or more times per day during the past 30 days, 15.1% ate from fast food restaurants, and 57.1% drank carbonated beverages during the 30-day period.

Clinical data reveal an increasing trend in obesity among children in the 0-5 age group with the prevalence rate rising from 9% in 2003 to 12% in 2011.¹

A major factor influencing obesity in Dominica was cited as unhealthy life styles meaning the consumption of energy dense foods and insufficient physical activity.

In addition The World Health Organization (WHO) advises that *current evidence suggests that increasing consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages is associated with overweight and obesity in children. Therefore, reducing consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages would also reduce the risk of childhood overweight and obesity.*

Overweight and obese children are at higher risk of developing serious health problems including type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma and other respiratory problems, sleep disorders and liver disease. They may also suffer from psychological effects, such as low self-esteem, depression and social isolation. Childhood obesity also increases the risk of obesity, non-communicable diseases, premature death and disability in adulthood.

¹ *Unpublished data, Health Information Unit, Ministry of Health, 2011*

In addition it is estimated that the economic burden of diabetes and hypertension stands at between 1.4% and 8% of GDP in the Caribbean, thus creating a significant drain on the countries' economies, and posing a threaten to growth and development.

It is within this context of rising rates of increased body mass (overweight and obesity) that the Adopt Healthy Habits Campaign was conceived.

Introduction

The *Adopt Healthy Habits* Campaign follows on the activities implemented in observance of World Diabetes Day 2018. The Dominica Diabetes Association (DOMDA) is cognizant of the rising rates of body mass (overweight and obesity) among children, the youth and working population. DOMDA also recognizes the association between the consumption of harmful quantities of free sugars and energy dense foods, obesity and non-communicable diseases. This campaign therefore is a call to action for families, every man, woman and child to adopt habits that promote good health.

The campaign starts with a call to drink more water by replacing sodas and sweetened drinks (juices) with water as the beverage of choice. It is also a call to eat more fruits for snack. Other good and healthy habits will be added subsequently.

Objective

To achieve a reduction in obesity across all population groups

Specific Objectives

1. To increase awareness of the link between consumption of sugars, obesity and non-communicable diseases especially diabetes
2. To encourage increase consumption of fruits and water

Programme Contents

A. Water Wednesdays....Fruit Fridays call to action

Families are encouraged to put down the sodas and sweetened juices and drink water every Wednesday. Likewise, families are encouraged to rethink the snacking options and to choose fruits instead.

Dominica Diabetes



Association

Adopt Healthy Habits
Water Wednesdays...Fruit Fridays
Campaign Launch

New Town Primary School
Tuesday January 8, 2019 9:00 am

Programme

Welcome	Ms. A. Williams	School Principal
Campaign Overview	M. Birmingham	President DOMDA
Feature Address	Dr. L. Esprit	Director PHCS
Presentation to school	Dr. R. La Fleur	Secretary DOMDA
Vote of Thanks	Student	