Covid-19 & Obesity
Implications for diet and nutrition in the Caribbean

Healthy Caribbean Coalition
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Obesity increases susceptibility for severe COVID-19 Infection

Multiple organ & Tissue damage
Inflammation & Reduced immunity
Is the pandemic enabling unhealthy diets & obesity?

Food Supply Chain Disruptions

Consumer behaviours

Unhealthy food environment

Food system control mechanisms
Un/intended exposures?

“….long lines waiting for fast food”

“….students to receive meals from chain (fast food) restaurants”

“…..sugary drinks for frontline workers and vulnerable groups”

“…donations of sugar to elderly and poor relief groups”
COVID–19 within an obesity epidemic

**Existing Risk factors**
- 1 sugary drink/day
- Fast foods
- Low fruits & vegetables
- Sedentary
- Micronutrient deficiencies
  - Anemia (iron)
  - “Hidden hunger”
- Depression
- Food insecurity
Retail food landscape (Jamaica)
– Variety of foods & beverage categories

- Primarily processed & ultra-processed products
- 12% with erroneous food labels (i.e. missing or incorrect information)

Database = 6261 products

Soares-Wynter et al in Foods 2020, 9:65
% Processed foods & beverages with excess unhealthy nutrients

- MEAT & EGG
- SAUCES & SPREADS
- READY-TO-HEAT
- CEREALS & GRAINS
- SNACKS
- DESSERTS
- BAKERY ITEMS
- DAIRY
- SODAS
- 100% JUICE

Health–focused food environment

– Striking a (comprehensive) balance

Nutritious & plant–based diet

Limit ultra–processed foods & beverages

Physical activity

Agricultural/Farming Initiatives

Corporate & social responsibility

Meal support programmes

Mental & emotional health

Control mechanisms
Protection during the pandemic

- Optimize nutritional status and immune protection
- Secure health & food environments
  - Home
  - Schools, worksites
  - Community
  - National
  - Regional
- Support healthy food & nutrition policy actions
- Protect vulnerable groups
Make the healthy choice your preferred choice.

THANK YOU