WEIGHING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19: NUTRITION, OVERWEIGHT, OBESITY AND NCDS

Emerging Trends in Overweight and Obesity in Barbados and Paediatric BMI Over the Course of the COVID-19 Pandemic

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BARBADOS
An estimated 1 in 3 children in the primary school and secondary school setting in Barbados is overweight/obese.

...similar experience in other Caribbean territories.

These two non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in particular are affecting an increasing number of students.

Other NCDs e.g. asthma, allergies, cancers, prevalence far less
Factors influencing the balance

*MAINLY*
- environmental - cultural
- biological-genetic
- changing lifestyles
- physical activity

Being obese increases the risk of (non-communicable diseases = NCDs)
- diabetes
- heart disease
- stroke
- arthritis
- some cancers
Pre COVID-19 consumption patterns

Barbados - student population survey

- 18.5% ate “fast food” x 3-4 /wk
- 73.3% reported drinking 1 or more carbonated drinks/day
- 15% - NO vegetables/ fruits in the past month

(surveys by Healthy Caribbean Coalition)
Pre COVID-19 consumption patterns: *All countries versus Barbados*

Key to colours: dark red=sugar; light blue=milk; orange=legumes; greens=fruit, veg.

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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>item consumed</th>
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<td>(All)</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>nuts and seeds (g/day)</td>
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<td>sugar-sweetened (g/day)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>vegetables (g/day)</td>
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<td>seafood (g/day)</td>
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High profile messages to compete with marketing strategies is vital-HSFB schools’ campaign
Sensitisation

**Healthy lifestyles - nutrition**
- 5 servings of fruit and vegetables
- 4 servings of water per day
- 3 servings of protein (including dairy)
- 2 hours max. of screen time/day
- 1 hour/day of mod. physical activity
- 0 sugar sweetened beverages
These schools have agreed to be forerunners in creating a policy-based healthy school environment for the nation’s children …our future.

Thursday 18th July 2019
THE MODEL SCHOOLS’ PROGRAMME - GOAL

The RESTRICTION of beverages with added sugars by new school year...
which calls for a MAJOR change of attitude towards sugar

The build-out of a HEALTH CLUB which includes aspects of education and fun activities, indoor and outdoor

PUBLIC EDUCATION
Conduct sensitization activities with parents, teachers, school vendors and students
Strategies to maintain/ reduce BMI at the individual level

Monitoring
Evaluation

Implementation of specific measures - nutrition counselling
- Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados - exercise by prescription
  - weekly programme at HSFB YUTE GYM
- Model Schools (6) concept....SSBs, physical activity, school gardens
PILLAR 4 – EVALUATION

- Effect on canteen operations
- Effect on vendors outside of the schools
- Schools audit with selected forms (2/4/6 levels)
- Interviews with heads of PTAs and Principals
- Monitoring of selected students
ENTER COVID-19 PANDEMIC - early 2020

Lockdowns implemented across the world have negatively impacted diet, sleep and physical activity among children with obesity. University of Buffalo research. *Obesity* - April 2020 41 students in Verona, Italy

STUDY FINDINGS:
- children ate an additional meal per day
- slept an extra half hour per day
- added nearly five hours per day in front of phone, computer and television screens
- dramatically increased their consumption of red meat, sugary drinks and junk foods.
- the amount of vegetables consumed remained unchanged
physical activity, on the other hand, decreased by more than two hours per week

Negative change in behaviour, indicating that children with obesity feared worse on weight control lifestyle programs while at home, compared to when they are engaged in their school curriculum.

LOCAL PAEDIATRICIANS’ OBSERVATIONS anecdotally

...definite increases in weight during COVID-19 pandemic
Future trends....
COVID-19 is here for an uncertain duration

Recently launched

“ACT NOW” Campaign

prevention of childhood obesity
Post Covid-19 Guidelines for children.. for optimising health

- increasing use of telehealth, especially for monitoring of BMI
- Health visits more often - x2-x3/year: paediatrician/general physician/clinic
- Weight, height, BMI data..aiming for near ideal BMIs
- Monitoring academic education and psychosocial health aspects
- Immunisation status to be kept current- observed neglect
- Counselling of parents.. to detect, address issues
- Focus on introducing virtual healthy lifestyle programmes so families can be advised on taking appropriate lifestyle choices during and after lockdown periods.
References

Angelo Pietrobelli, Luca Pecoraro, Alessandro Ferruzzi, Moonseong Heo, Myles Faith, Thomas Zoller, Franco Antoniazzi, Giorgio Piacentini, S. Nicole Feambach, Steven B. Heymsfield.

Thank you!

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