

Campaign Backgrounder

“Are We Drinking Ourselves Sick?” Mass Media Campaign

Background

- 8 out of 10 deaths in Barbados are caused by non-communicable diseases (NCDs)¹.
- 1 in 3 children in Barbados is overweight or obese².
- 1 in 5 adult Barbadians has diabetes³. 66% of adults is overweight, and 33% is obese.²⁰ The prevalence of obesity is almost twice as high in women (43%) as in men (23%).^{3,20}
- Sugary drinks often have no nutritional value and are particularly harmful to the body in liquid form. Liquid sugars used to sweeten beverages are absorbed more quickly by the liver and processed in a way that increases fat and glycogen deposits,^{4,5,6,7,8} which can lead to fatty liver disease and increase risks for diabetes and other NCDs.^{9,10}
- Excess sugar consumption is a major cause of obesity and its related diseases, increasing risk of type 2 diabetes, hypertension, liver and kidney damage, heart disease, and some cancers.^{11,12,13,14,15}
- Drinking just 1 sugary drink a day increases the likelihood of being overweight by 55% for children¹⁶ and increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes by 26%¹⁷.
- Having diabetes, heart disease, and hypertension increases the health risks from COVID-19¹⁸.
- 92% of Barbadians think drinking sugary drinks contributes a lot/somewhat to obesity in adults and children.¹⁹
- 95% of Barbadians believe it is very important or somewhat important that the government play an important role in reducing obesity.¹⁹

Campaign Overview

The “Are We Drinking Ourselves Sick?” campaign aims to inform Barbadians about the health harms of consuming excess sugar, particularly via sugary drinks. These include carbonated and noncarbonated soft drinks, fruit drinks, energy and sports drinks. The campaign also firmly highlights the public support of and need for government policy to help reduce sugary drinks consumption and thereby play a role in reducing obesity, diabetes, and other NCDs in Barbados. The campaign tagline is: “Are We Drinking Ourselves Sick?,” with a call to action to implement measures to reduce sugary drinks consumption for a healthy Barbados. The campaign video chronicles the sugary drinks intake of a middle-aged woman/wife/mother, Rosie, from the start of her day at breakfast, on her way to work, at work, to dinner time. All that sugar adds up, so Rosie became ill and was hospitalized. With her family by her side, she realized the gravity of consuming too many sugary drinks.

Campaign Main Messages

Drinking sugary drinks increases the risk of obesity, type 2 diabetes, and other NCDs. Are we drinking ourselves sick? All that sugar adds up; Help our children grow up healthy; Especially now, we need government policy to reduce sugary drinks consumption for a healthy Barbados.

Ways to Support the Campaign

1. Find out more at <https://healthykidsbarbados.org/>
2. Reduce consumption of sugary drinks.
3. Support ours and our children’s health.
4. Link your website to <https://healthykidsbarbados.org/>
5. Publish the campaign materials on your website and social media pages.
6. Sign our petition to policymakers supporting the need for leaders to enact policy for the excessive consumption of sugary beverages in Barbados.
7. Raise awareness and support the campaign regularly through your social media posts by: using the hashtags: #DrinkingOurselvesSick, #WeDeserveBetter #ProtectOurChildren, #PeopleBeforeProfit, #RightToHealth, #HealthyCaribbeanYouth #SwitchItUp246, and #SwitchItUpBarbados
 - a. Like, comment, share or repost messages from @hsfbarbados social media pages.

¹ World Health Organization (WHO). Non-communicable Diseases Country Profile. 2018. https://www.who.int/nmh/countries/brb_en.pdf?ua=1

² St. John, Hall, Knight, Hinds, Fernandez, Gaskin. Non-communicable Diseases in a Group of Primary School Children in Barbados 2010

³ The George Alleyne Chronic Disease Research Centre. The Barbados Health of the Nation Survey. 2013. <http://www.uwi.edu/cdrc/barbados-health-nation-survey>

⁴ Malik VS, Hu FB. Fructose and Cardiometabolic Health: What the Evidence From Sugar-Sweetened Beverages Tells Us. *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* 2015; 66(14): 1615-24.

⁵ Sundborn G, Thornley S, Merriman TR, et al. Are Liquid Sugars Different from Solid Sugar in Their Ability to Cause Metabolic Syndrome? *Obesity* 2019; 27(6): 879-87

⁶ L. SK, I. GM, A. BW, et al. Pathways and mechanisms linking dietary components to cardiometabolic disease: thinking beyond calories. *Obesity Reviews* 2018; 0(0).

⁷ Stanhope KL. Role of fructose-containing sugars in the epidemics of obesity and metabolic syndrome. *Annual review of medicine* 2012; 63: 329-43.

⁸ Stanhope KL, Bremer AA, Medici V, et al. Consumption of Fructose and High Fructose Corn Syrup Increase Postprandial Triglycerides, LDLCholesterol, and Apolipoprotein-B in Young Men and Women. *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* 2011; 96(10): E1596-E605.

⁹ L. SK, I. GM, A. BW, et al. Pathways and mechanisms linking dietary components to cardiometabolic disease: thinking beyond calories. *Obesity Reviews* 2018; 0(0).

¹⁰ Jensen T, Abdelmalek MF, Sullivan S, et al. Fructose and sugar: A major mediator of nonalcoholic fatty liver disease. *J Hepatol* 2018; 68(5): 1063-75.

¹¹ World Health Organization. Global Health Observatory (GHO) data: Raised blood pressure., 2019 (accessed November 23 2019).

¹² United Nations Development Program, World Health Organization, United Nations Inter-agency Taskforce on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases. Barbados NCD Investment case, 2015.

¹³ World Cancer Research Fund International. Curbing global sugar consumption: Effective food policy actions to help promote healthy diets and tackle obesity 2015. <http://www.wcrf.org/int/policy/our-policywork/curbing-global-sugar-consumption>.

¹⁴ Malik VS, Hu FB. Sugar-Sweetened Beverages and Cardiometabolic Health: An Update of the Evidence. *Nutrients* 2019; 11(8): 1840.

¹⁵ Malik VS, Li Y, Pan A, et al. Long-term consumption of sugar-sweetened and artificially sweetened beverages and risk of mortality in US adults. *Circulation* 2019; 139(18): 2113-25.

¹⁶ Morenga LT, Mallard S, and Mann J. (2013). Dietary sugars and body weight: systematic review and meta-analyses of randomised controlled trials and cohort studies. *BMJ*, 346: e7492.

¹⁷ Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Nutrition Source. Sugary Drinks. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-drinks/sugary-drinks/>

¹⁸ World Heart Federation. COVID-19 and CVD. 2020. <https://www.world-heart-federation.org/covid-19-and-cvd/>

¹⁹ Caribbean Development Research Services Inc. (CADRES). Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Public Opinion Poll. 2018

²⁰ Ministry of Health, Barbados. The Barbados Health of the Nation Survey: Core Findings 2015. 2016. http://www.archive.healthycaribbean.org/newsletters/aug-2015/CDRC_HealthOfTheNationSurvey.pdf