



Frequently Asked Questions on

NON COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

QUESTION 1: WHAT ARE NON COMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCDs)?

ANSWER: Non Communicable Diseases are slow progressing, long duration largely preventable illnesses caused due to numerous common modifiable risk factors resulting from poor lifestyle choices.

QUESTION 2: WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON NCDs?

ANSWER: The four most common NCDs are cardiovascular diseases (such as heart attacks and stroke), cancers, chronic respiratory diseases (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma) and diabetes. These four NCDs account for 80% of all deaths due to NCDs.

QUESTION 3: HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE AFFECTED BY NCDs?

- ANSWER:
- NCDs are the leading cause of death in the world, exceeding deaths due to communicable diseases, maternal and perinatal conditions, nutritional causes and injuries put together.
 - NCDs caused 36 million deaths (i.e. 63% of all global deaths) in 2008; of these one-quarter (9 million) died below the age of 60 years.
 - The NCD epidemic is increasing in all WHO regions including Botswana.
 - There is a significant rise of patients consulted in Health facilities in the showing symptoms of NCDs.

QUESTION 4: WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON RISK FACTORS THAT INCREASE THE CHANCES OF DEVELOPING NCDs?

- ANSWER:
- The four common and modifiable risk factors that increase the chances of developing NCDs are; **tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and harmful use of alcohol.**
 - Metabolic/biological factors, such as high blood pressure or hypertension, overweight and obesity, raised cholesterol and raised blood glucose that result from the above risk factors are predictors of NCDs.

- Globally, 13% of deaths are attributable to high blood pressure, 9% to tobacco use, 6% to physical inactivity and blood glucose. Physical inactivity is also the main cause for approximately 21%–25% of breast and colon cancers, 27% of diabetes and 30% of ischaemic heart disease burden.

QUESTION 5: WHAT ARE THE DRIVERS OF THE NCD EPIDEMIC?

- ANSWER:
- In addition to population ageing, NCDs are driven by the negative effects of globalization, such as unfair trade and irresponsible marketing of processed and high-energy foods.
 - Rapid and unplanned urbanization in turn increases exposure to behavioral risk factors of NCDs (such as reduced options for physical activity) and increases exposure to environmental pollution.
 - Social determinants, such as low levels of education and poverty, are associated with risk factors of NCDs, such as smoking, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and excessive alcohol consumption.

QUESTION 6: WHAT ARE THE HEALTH IMPACTS OF NCDs?

- ANSWER:
- Just four NCDs account for the majority of all NCD deaths: cardiovascular diseases (17 million or 48% of deaths), cancers (7.6 million or 21% of NCD deaths), respiratory diseases (including asthma and COPD, 4.2 million) and diabetes (1.3 million deaths).
 - NCDs cause premature and largely avoidable deaths during the productive years of life; 34% of NCD deaths in the Region occur among adults below 60 years of age, compared to 23% in the rest of the world.

QUESTION 7: CAN NCDs BE PREVENTED AND MANAGED?

- ANSWER:
- Primary prevention of NCDs in conjunction with early diagnosis and treatment through the primary health care services is the best way to provide “effective” and “equitable” NCD care for populations.
 - Eliminating the major risk factors: tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and harmful use of alcohol can help prevent NCDs.

- Simple lifestyle changes, such as improved diet, increased physical activity and smoking cessation, can prevent 80% of heart diseases and stroke, 80% of Type 2 diabetes and over 30% of cancers.
- Just 150 minutes of moderate physical activity a week or its equivalent is estimated to reduce the risk of ischaemic heart disease by 30%, the risk of diabetes by 27% and the risk of breast and colon cancer by 21%–25%.
- NCDs such as cancers if detected early can be treated effectively. The later an NCD is detected, the more difficult and expensive it is to treat.

QUESTION 8: WHAT CAN DIFFERENT PARTNERS DO TO FIGHT NCDs?

- A multisectoral approach is key to addressing prevention and control of NCDs as many determinants of NCDs lie outside the health sector. **NCD prevention is everybody's business** and every sector/partner can help in the prevention and management of NCDs.

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