

Curbing the rising incidence of deaths from NCDs among young and middle-aged adults in Nigeria.

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Definitions

- Non communicable diseases (NCDs):
These refer to certain medical conditions that are not infectious in nature; result in long term complications and need long term care.

Examples are cancer, stroke, myocardial infarction (heart attack) and epilepsy.

- Young people:

This refers to those persons aged between 15 - 24 years (United Nations data).

However in medical circles and in several countries people less than 40 years of age are still referred to as young.

- Middle age:

This generally refers to the period between 40 – 65 years of age.

It is a phase of life marked by gradual physical, mental and social decline in individuals as they age.

- Life expectancy at birth in Nigeria is among the lowest in Africa and the world.
- Maternal mortality in Nigeria ranks among the highest in Africa.

Non communicable diseases

- According to UN data, NCDs cause 41 million deaths each year.
- This represents 70% of all global deaths.
- NCDs, also called chronic diseases, affect mostly people in low and middle income countries such as Nigeria.
- NCDs cause 50% of disability-affected life years and 20% of deaths in young people.

- As at October 2022, out of Nigeria's population of 217 million, young people make up 70% (151 million).
- About 42% of these 151 million young people are less than 15 years of age.
- As at November 2022, 63% of Nigerians (133 million) had multidimensional poverty.
- All these facts impact development of NCDs.

Main types of NCDs

1	Cardiovascular diseases	Largest contributor to this is hypertension. Includes heart attacks and strokes.
2	Diabetes mellitus	Major cause of blindness, kidney failure, heart attacks and strokes. Unhealthy diet, sedentary lifestyle, tobacco use contribute to this.
3	Preventable cancers	Health systems are often unable to cope with these conditions due to lack of screening or vaccines.
4	Chronic airway diseases	Bronchial asthma, chronic bronchitis, emphysema are very common and contributed to by smoking and air pollution
5	Mental health conditions	Often under-recognised and undermanaged, mental disorders increased worldwide after COVID and limits ability to reach potentials.
6	Unintentional injuries	Road traffic accidents, drowning, falls, poisonings, burns are important causes of death too.

Contributors to developing NCDs

1. Tobacco/psychoactive drug use
2. Physical inactivity
3. Harmful use of alcohol
4. Unhealthy diet
5. Air pollution

These account as risk factors for most of the NCDs mentioned earlier.

Steps to reducing risk and incidence of NCDs

- Catch them young – a good number of NCDs were prepared for by behaviour during childhood. Eating and lifestyle choices.
- Stop tobacco use. No amount of tobacco is useful.
- Avoid exposure to use of psychoactive substances - marijuana, colos, cocaine, tramadol, fuel etc

- Engage in regular physical exercises/ keep moving. Avoid sedentary lifestyle and weight gain. Minimum is 30 minutes of walking 5 times a week. This boosts physical and mental health.
- No alcohol use is best. If not possible, limit it to 21 units of alcohol per week for men and 14 units per week for women.

- Healthy diet – More green leafy vegetables, more fruits, less red meat, more white meat, more fish, more legumes, use cholesterol free oils, no need to avoid eggs, drink 3 litres of water daily, more nuts, eat foods with more fibre rather than pure starch, less processed foods.
- Best IF STARTED from childhood.

- Environmental pollution is now recognised as a key contributor to having NCDs.
- Keep your environment neat, clean and attractive. Clear drainages regularly.
- Clear wastes and garbage promptly to designated dumpsites.
- Avoid generators. Wear masks where necessary.
- Regular fumigation of environment

- Early detection of NCDs - the importance of regular health checks and screening exercises at school entry, place of employment, travels etc.
- Availability of health centres and hospitals with adequate facilities and personnel to render required medical services.
- The role of primary health care.
- Access to health care (affordability). The concept of universal health insurance and various options possible.

Conclusion

- Death is a finality that all living things owe nature. We cannot cheat nature but Grace can influence and alter nature.
- Men and women have been so eminently positioned, such that armed with facts and opportunities, they are invited to make healthy and life sustaining choices in their activities of daily living.
- May God in His mercy bless us with good health. Amen.

Thank you for your kind attention.