



Adults must help children avoid sugary drinks at home and at school

As part of its Child Month initiative and continued efforts to prevent childhood obesity, The Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados (HSFB), through its Childhood Obesity Prevention (COP) Programme, is launching its inaugural “Switch It Up” mass media campaign. It encourages parents/guardians and policy makers to protect our children by cutting out sugary drinks at home and through policies supporting a restriction of sugary drinks at schools and marketing restriction to children. It also reinforces the harmful effects of excess consumption of sugary drinks, like the increased risk of tooth decay and obesity. The campaign’s tagline is “Switch It Up, Protect Our Children” and is being done in partnership with the Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC) and the George Alleyne Chronic Disease Research Centre (GACDRC).

8 out of 10 deaths in Barbados are caused by non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and there is a 31% prevalence of overweight children. HSFB President, Dr. Kenneth Connell, said “The evidence is clear that childhood obesity is a serious issue in Barbados and must be addressed. I believe a robust national school nutrition policy that includes a restriction of sugary drinks in schools and marketing to children can help to reduce consumption of sugary drinks and therefore improve the health of our population, especially our children.”

Global health organizations like the World Health Organization, PAHO, World Cancer Research Fund, the World Dental Association and International Diabetes Federation, have warned that excess sugar consumption could bring on obesity which increases the risk of developing non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, some forms of cancers, tooth decay and type 2 diabetes.

The NCD burden of cardiovascular disease and diabetes is approximately \$BBD 64 million per year on cardiovascular disease and diabetes alone. The George Alleyne Chronic Disease Centre sees over 400 cases of heart attacks and over 700 cases of strokes per year and are major risk factors of Type 2 diabetes and hypertension, which can be caused by obesity.

Medical Doctor and Health Researcher at the Centre Dr. Natasha Sobers said “It’s best to start obesity prevention from childhood to ensure a healthier population. As a place where children spend the majority of their days, we must ensure that the school environment is one that aims to reduce obesity and are health-promoting environments. Parents also have a responsibility to provide a healthy environment for their children.”

The campaign ad for “Switch It Up” shows a child consuming sugary drinks from infancy to adulthood. He develops tooth decay during his teenage years and as an adult is shown to be suffering from Type 2 diabetes.

The “Switch It Up” campaign will run on TV, radio, in newspapers, on social media and outdoor advertising options. Barbadians are encouraged to share messages about the campaign on social media using the hashtags: #SwitchItUp, #SwitchItUpBarbados, #ProtectOurChildren. They can



retweet posts or comment on posts from the Instagram or Facebook pages of @hsfbarbados and @healthycaribbean.

This campaign was inspired by the Play Every Day campaign, developed by the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services.

Further information and stills from the campaign are available upon request.

About the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados

The Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados Inc. is a non-profit organisation registered under the Companies Act 1982 of Barbados registration number 269 and under the Charities Act 1979-2 registration number 82. The Foundation was founded in 1985 as the Heart Foundation of Barbados and in 2006 embraced stroke to become the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados. It's Childhood Obesity Prevention (COP) Programme supports obesity prevention through mass media campaigns for increased awareness of the harms of sugary drinks and promotion of policy change.

For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact:

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