

Discover News-sheet for colleagues in Africa

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Avoidable Lifestyle Diseases



*In some parts of Africa, the way of life is changing rapidly
... not always in healthy ways. In the rush to be part of the modern world
we need to rediscover how to keep well.*

Dear Friends,

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are the leading cause of death globally. The World Health Organisation has just released a rather alarming report. They distinguished “infectious diseases”, such as malaria, diarrhoea, bronchitis and even HIV/AIDS, from the so-called “non-communicable diseases (NCDs)”, or lifestyle diseases, which include high blood pressure, heart problems, diabetes and cancer.

Lifestyle diseases are becoming more and more widespread. They are caused by physical inactivity, unhealthy diet, tobacco and other drug use, and the harmful use of alcohol. This means they are preventable!

Some figures from the report:

- NCD deaths are projected to increase by 15% globally between 2010 and 2020 (to 44 million deaths). In Africa, the increase will be over 20% and NCDs will cause around 3.9 million deaths by 2020.
- In Africa, there are still more deaths from infectious diseases than NCDs. But, also in Africa, the prevalence of NCDs is rising rapidly and is projected to cause almost three-quarters as many deaths as communicable, maternal, perinatal, and nutritional diseases by 2020, and to exceed them as the most common causes of death by 2030.
- The prevalence of high blood pressure was highest in Africa, where it was 46% for both sexes combined.



Obesity (severe overweight), is an increasing problem also in Africa. (Photo: Guardian newspaper)

This lady is 53, has seven children and lives in Kawangware slum in Nairobi. She can barely walk and suffers from numerous weight-related diseases.

WHO estimates 12.7% of African children will be overweight or obese by 2020.

Read more here: http://www.who.int/nmh/publications/ncd_report_chapter1.pdf

As members and associates of Discover, what does this mean for us as we work with our communities in Africa? We must be focussed and think, for the answer is clear:



Moringa leaves contain all the essential amino acids. That means all the proteins that one needs, that the body itself cannot produce. They also contain valuable minerals and vitamins.

Nutrition

A healthy diet provides the body with all it needs; fluid, essential amino and fatty acids, vitamins, minerals, and calories. The prevention of NCDs starts here. Ideally, grow and eat your own fruit and vegetables. Use organic methods. When buying fruit and vegetables, ensure that they are not contaminated with agricultural chemicals. In many African capital cities, the fruit and vegetables sold at the markets contain dangerously high amounts of chemicals, particularly pesticides. Only eat meat and fish when you know where it comes from. Avoid commercial fizzy drinks – they are extremely high in sugar. Drink a lot, drink clean water, herbal teas and

fruit juices.

Exercise

Exercise can reduce the risk of major illnesses, such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and cancer by up to 50%, and lower the risk of early death by up to 30% (WHO). Everyone would rather avoid the back-breaking work of carrying water and firewood on the head, but do ensure that every day you walk or do other vigorous exercise for at least half an hour. This is particularly important for people whose job means sitting behind a desk.

Avoid the risks associated with alcohol, tobacco or other illicit drugs: It is better to eliminate them altogether! The overuse of alcohol and drugs destroys families too.

How to treat, or at least relieve, the NCDs of diabetes, high blood pressure and cancer will be the subject of future newsletters. For now, I challenge you to discover, or rediscover, the key changes that you must make to your way of life and diet to prevent these conditions from ever happening. It is also important that we involve our families and communities in this process.

With my best wishes, Keith



Grain amaranth is also extremely nutritious, especially when mixed with maize or millet as porridge.