

Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition

Wednesday October 11th 2023

For Immediate Release

Barbadians Support Front-of-package Warning Labels

75% of Barbadians support front-of-package warning labels and The Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados is standing firmly behind this. The Foundation has launched its **“Give Us Warning Labels”** mass media campaign in a bid to build stronger support for the introduction of octagonal front-of-package warning labels as the CARICOM, and even local, standard as an effective way to help consumers to make healthier food choices. The campaign also highlights health harms of unhealthy foods, particularly ultra-processed (packaged) foods that are high in sodium, sugar, and saturated fat or trans-fat. These ultra-processed foods can increase the risk of obesity, hypertension, Type 2 diabetes, and heart disease. **“Give Us Warning Labels”** is launched in collaboration with the Healthy Caribbean Coalition, Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), Caribbean Institute for Health Research (CAIHR), and the Barbados Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition ahead of World Standards Day on October 14, and World Food Day, on October 16.

80% of deaths in Barbados are caused by non-communicable diseases (NCDs), 31% of our children are overweight/obese, and 1 in 5 adult Barbadians has diabetes. Given these concerning figures, the time for action is now to introduce a food labeling system that has been proven to work. Scientific evidence shows that the octagonal warning labels on the front of food packages indicating if a product is “HIGH IN” certain nutrients, is the best performing system for consumers to identify unhealthy foods quickly, easily, and correctly.

Most shoppers spend less than 10 seconds selecting each item, which is not enough time to review current back-of-the-pack nutrition labels. These labels are often complicated and ineffective for most people, so they prefer labels that are clear, and are easy to understand.

Interim CEO of the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados, Greta Yearwood, said *“As we continue to battle Non-communicable Diseases in Barbados, particularly childhood obesity, it is increasingly apparent that our people, our parents and our seniors need every tool to make informed decisions about what they are eating. The new Modeling Study conducted by PAHO and the University of the West Indies (September 2023) says, ‘it is estimated that front of package warning labels in Barbados would be able to avert NCD deaths and save millions of dollars.’ Consumers can be easily overwhelmed in supermarkets, with nutritional facts and pretty packaging of ultra-processed products but the evidence is clear, warning labels, which are concise and easy to understand could show our people what they are consuming quickly. The health of this country will continue to be at stake if this tool is not adopted to work in harmony with the suite of other WHO policies that have already been implemented by our government.”*

The **“Give Us Warning Labels”** campaign will be aired on broadcast, print and digital media in Barbados. Persons are encouraged to share messages about the campaign on social media using the hashtags: #GiveUsWarningLabels, #OurHealthComesFirst, #What’sInOurFood?, #GiveUsTheFacts, and #RightToKNOW. They can also like, comment, share or repost content from the Instagram and Facebook pages @hsfbarbados. We are grateful for the campaign which was inspired by the “Right to Information Concept” campaign developed by Red PaPaz in Colombia.



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About the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados

The Heart & Stroke Foundation of Barbados Inc. is a non-profit organization 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 the following persons:

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