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PRESS RELEASE

Belize Observes World Obesity Day

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World Obesity Day is celebrated annually on March 4. This year's theme is "Changing Perspectives: Let's Talk About Obesity." The day serves to sensitize persons to the dangers of obesity and encourages practical solutions to help people achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Obesity is defined by the World Health Organization as "abnormal or excessive fat accumulation that presents a risk to health." It is usually measured by Body Mass Index (BMI) or other methods such as waist-to-hip ratios. Childhood obesity has nearly doubled every 10 years and there are currently about 14 million children worldwide living with obesity. Obesity affects children's physical health and social and emotional well-being. If childhood obesity is not effectively managed, it is often carried into adolescence and adulthood.

The Healthy Caribbean Coalition has reported that there is one in every three children in the region is obese. Latin America has also reported over 100 million persons that are obese. In Belize, there is approximately 32% prevalence of obesity in adults and 7% obesity in children under five years.

People living with obesity are at a greater risk for developing chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and certain cancers. Other health concerns include sleep apnea, digestive and mental disorders, and poor quality of life.

To maintain a healthy weight, the Ministry of Health & Wellness encourages persons to check their weight and body mass index regularly, and practice the following tips:

- Support and promote exclusive breastfeeding for newborns for the first six months;
- Reduce consumption of fried foods and sugar-sweetened beverages;
- Reduce large portions of food and eat smaller meals;
- Drink more water;
- Consume fresh fruits and vegetables most days of the week;
- Engage in at least 30-45 minutes of physical activity most days of the week; and
- Promote healthy environments that support healthy eating and physical activity.

The Ministry of Health & Wellness is committed to implementing policies and supporting activities that support wellness, good nutrition, and physical activity. These are all ideal for addressing obesity.

The ministry believes that Belize can make a difference in combating this major public health challenge with united effort, inter-sectoral collaboration and support.

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