

Why are we eating what we're eating?: Public perspectives from Jamaica, St. Kitts & Nevis and St. Vincent & the Grenadines

MM Murphy
George Alleyne Chronic Disease Research Centre, University of the West Indies, Barbados

CHANGES OVER GENERATIONS

- Fast food and ultra-processed foods high in fat, sugar and salt are no longer treats, but the norm.
- Children are not exposed to local, seasonal fruits and vegetables.
- Food is no longer prepared at home.
- Families rarely eat together (*Sundays an exception).
- Men are getting more involved in food purchasing and preparation.



WHAT DO PEOPLE KNOW?

- Most people know which foods are healthy or unhealthy.
- But, cost and convenience override knowledge.
- Accessibility is important, but affordability is the bottom line.
- Young people know that non-communicable diseases can result from unhealthy eating, but will only cross that bridge when/if they come to it.



"Belly full, but hungry for nutrition"

HOW THE PAST IMPACTS THE PRESENT

- Early enforcement of eating healthy foods = rebellion!
- Adults who were forced to eat fruits and vegetables as children eat less of these healthy foods, because now they have choice.
- Now, many adults would not force their own children to eat items that they didn't want to eat, based on their past childhood experiences.



"Children nowadays doh eat dem tings!"

WE NEED TO

- Make the cost of local un-processed foods more affordable, compared imported and processed foods.
- Have messaging and marketing that promotes and encourages healthy and nutritious options, without being forceful.
- Expose children to nutritious local foods in as many settings as possible, along with enough information to allow them to make healthy choices.
- When healthy foods are introduced in schools, we must ensure follow-through at home, or else children will lose interest in eating them.

