



Cardiovascular Disease in the Americas: Fact Sheet



The Problem

Cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) include a group of disorders that affect the heart and blood vessels and typically manifest in the form of coronary heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, hypertension, peripheral artery disease, rheumatic heart disease, and heart failure.

The majority of cardiovascular diseases are caused by three main modifiable risk factors:

1. tobacco use,
2. physical inactivity, and
3. unhealthy diet.

Hypertension (high blood pressure) is the most closely and causally associated risk for CVD, accounting for 54% of strokes and 47% of ischemic heart disease.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, an estimated 114.3 million people 20 years and older had high blood pressure in 2000, and predictions are that this number will increase by 75% by 2025.

Adjusted Mortality Rate per 100,000 inhabitants (2003-2005)	Cerebrovascular Disease	Ischemic Heart Disease
Regional		
Americas	42.3	81.0
North America	30.7	93.9
Latin America & the Caribbean	54.3	65.5
Subregional		
Latin America	54.1	65.2
Mexico	34.5	66.2
Central American Isthmus	39.6	59.1
Hispanic Caribbean	69.1	82.1
Andean Subregion	44.2	73.1
Brazil	70.9	67.4
Southern Cone	48.6	44.6
Non-Hispanic Caribbean	86.0	108.7

An Epidemiological and Demographic Transition

The means of preventing and controlling cardiovascular diseases are already well-established; high income countries—followed by middle income ones— are now showing continuous progress in their prevention and control. The low and lower middle income countries face the dual challenge of coping with scarce resources to address both non communicable and communicable diseases, as well as infant and maternal mortality.

Once thought to be an issue primarily involving older people in high-income countries, cardiovascular diseases are now seen to increasingly affect people of working age, thereby contributing disproportionately to the loss of potential years of healthy life and economic productivity.

This is already recognized as a major and growing public health problem, particularly affecting low- and middle-income countries; but what is less recognized is the contribution of compromised health status due to cardiovascular diseases to the inequity gap in the Region.

PAHO Initiatives

PAHO has spearheaded a number of initiatives for the reduction of CVDs in the Region:

- ➔ Implementation of Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in the majority of the countries in the Region is underway. Regulations regarding smoke free environments, packaging and labeling tobacco products and ban on sales to minors and on advertising and are the most advanced ones in the Region.
- ➔ On 22 June 2008, the *Trans Fat Free Americas* Declaration of Rio de Janeiro was signed by a number of representatives of food industry, governments, health organizations, and academia, with the aim of eliminating trans fatty acids in industrially processed foods in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- ➔ An *Expert Group on Salt* has been created in order to
 - ✓ explore the current epidemiological situation of CVDs in the Americas,
 - ✓ assess existing policies,
 - ✓ monitor salt intake,
 - ✓ evaluate policies of salt fluoridation and iodization, and
 - ✓ foster public/private partnerships.
- ➔ The *Partners' Forum* was initiated as a platform for
 - ✓ uniting people from government, the private sector, and civil society to raise awareness of chronic diseases,
 - ✓ advocate for public policy changes,
 - ✓ share successful practices, and build a dynamic, cross-sector coalition of actors supporting these efforts.

Mortality rates from diseases of the circulatory system (100,000 pop)
total - estimated : 2006

