

Abstract

In Jamaica, health promotion and education programmes have focused on empowering and facilitating individuals and communities to engage in healthy lifestyle practices to reduce the incidence of non-communicable chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. The elderly receive health education through senior citizens clubs, churches, health services and the mass media.

A cross-sectional survey was carried out in Linstead, Saint Catherine among a quota sample of elderly adults (60 years and over) in order to ascertain their knowledge, attitude, beliefs, and practices of healthy lifestyles. Factors examined were their knowledge, self-reported eating habits, practices, health seeking, and exercise behaviours.

Most respondents were knowledgeable about the factors that contribute to a healthy lifestyle including the benefits to be derived from exercise. Ninety-one percent (91) of respondents knew that high fat and salt intake could eventually lead to stroke. Eighty-six percent (86) agreed that exercise reduces stress, and 88% knew that smoking was bad for health. Most of the elderly were physically able to engage in some form of exercise or strenuous work that burned calories.

The study also revealed some health knowledge deficits, which has implications for health program planning.