EDITORIAL

Let's not ignore ticking obesity time bomb

News that rising obesity in the country is predisposing Ugandans to cancer should send shockwaves through every household and health stakeholders. With obesity already affecting 13% of Ugandans according to the 2022 Demographic and Health Survey, this is an emergency threatening to overwhelm our already strained healthcare system.

It is scientifically proven that excess body fat breaks down to produce additional oestrogen, fuelling hormone-related cancers, including breast, ovarian, and prostate cancer. Ugandan hospitals are seeing more individuals who are obese battling hormone-related cancers. This is extending beyond cancer, with obesity also driving type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and other non-communicable diseases that collectively drain Uganda's limited healthcare resources.

A HEALTHY UGANDA DEPENDS ON THE CHOICES WE MAKE TODAY. LET'S NOT OPT FOR CONVENIENCE OVER HEALTH

With 46,000 new cancer cases annually and only 22% receiving care, obesity-related complications will push our health system to a breaking point. If obesity rates were halved, Uganda could save billions in healthcare costs while freeing resources for other critical needs.

A leaner population means higher productivity, reduced absenteeism, and a workforce in a position to drive economic growth.

Deliberate lifestyle choices are the solution to this concerning state of affairs: eating fewer carbohydrates and more fruits or vegetables, avoiding fatty foods and sugary drinks, engaging in high-intensity exercise often, and getting quality sleep. Despite the Government's plans for front-of-pack nutrition, individual responsibility to stay healthy remains paramount.

It should be noted that children are already suffering from diet-related cancers due to processed foods and sedentary lifestyles. Therefore, a future healthy Uganda depends on the decisions we all make today. Let's not choose convenience over health. Instead, let us not prioritise immediate gratification over long life. There is a long and happy life when you choose to live healthily.

Contact us by telephone on + 256 (0414) 337000
+256 (0414) 232050

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