

Promoting healthy lifestyle

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Overview

A healthy lifestyle is the goal people strive to achieve. This becomes easier when the country you live in actively promotes healthy lifestyles as a way of life and spearheads initiatives that help you achieve the same. UAE has been a forerunner in promoting healthy lifestyle to its citizens and residents. This document aims to showcase the various initiatives and measures taken by the UAE government to successfully promote healthy lifestyles in the country.

The World Health Organization defines Health Promotions as, *“the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve, their health. It moves beyond a focus on individual behavior towards a wide range of social and environmental interventions.”*

It is essential for any country to educate and provide information to its citizens and residents about the benefits of following a healthy lifestyle in communities, schools and workplaces.

UAE has been a leading example in promoting healthy lifestyles as a community. This is demonstrated by the various initiatives undertaken by the UAE government to raise awareness about how healthy lifestyles should become a way of life.

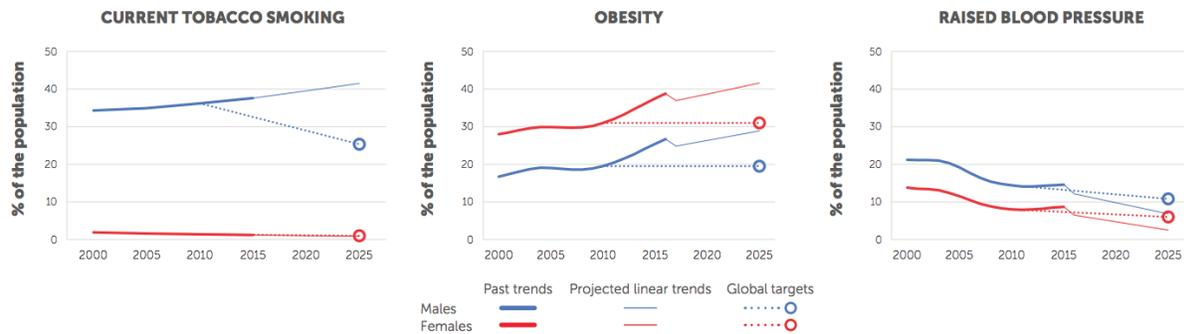
“Idleness is not only an attitude towards work; it starts with the mind”

~HIS HIGHNESS SHEIKH MOHAMMED BIN RASHID AL MAKTOUM
Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates
Ruler of Dubai

Issues

It can be seen that percentage of obese adults has been gradually increasing in the United Arab Emirates from a mere 13.7% in 1975 to 31.7% in 2016. This poses a serious threat for the people in UAE as it hinders active participation in various activities and creates a generation of lethargic children.

A Ministry of Health and Prevention report for 2018 has revealed that Cardiovascular Diseases (CVD) is a leading cause of mortality in the UAE. Of CVD deaths, 22% were attributable to acute myocardial infarction (AMI) the medical name for heart attack, 16% to cerebrovascular disease, a condition that affects blood supply to the brain, 6% to ischemic heart disease caused by narrowed heart arteries and 5% to hypertension. A high prevalence of obesity further increases the rate of CVD in the population.



Source: World Health Organization

A global [school-based health survey by WHO](#) conducted nationwide in UAE schools children noted that percentage of students who are overweight was 39.1% in the age group of 13-15 years, 37.3% in the age group of 16-17 years and 38.4% in the age group of 13-17 years. Around 17% of students were noted obese in the age group of 13-17 years. An alarming 59.7% of students were noted mostly inactive and spent three or more hours per day sitting and watching television, playing computer games.

2017 figures from the [International Diabetes Federation \(IDF\)](#) revealed that 17.3% of the UAE population between the ages of 20 and 79 have type 2 diabetes. There are over 1 million people living with diabetes in the UAE, placing the country 15th worldwide for age-adjusted comparative prevalence.

Initiatives

UAE has the [Ministry of Health and Prevention](#) (MOHAP) that works with an aim of creating healthy and happy community health that will be enhanced by providing innovative services and initiatives to deliver the message of healthy lifestyles to the citizens and residents of UAE.

Various projects and initiatives have been taken by MOHAP to address the issue of obesity, cardiovascular diseases and smoking. Some of them are:

- You Make the Change campaign
- Heart Experts Programme
- Ma'Kom initiative
- Healthy Restaurant Initiative.

You Make the Change Campaign

In line with the UAE National Agenda 2021, this campaign was a series of various awareness sessions conducted all over UAE wherein medical professionals met and

discussed about ways and means to achieve a healthy lifestyle and incorporate healthy habits into regular lifestyle.

Heart Experts Programme

A community outreach program that aims to achieve the National Indicators for the reduction of mortality due to cardiovascular disease. A group of students selected as ambassadors will spread awareness about cardiovascular health in their schools, neighborhood and the local community which will in turn help disseminate and promote concepts and practices supporting cardiovascular health.

Ma'Kom Initiative

“Dream Small. It adds up!” this is the motto of the Ma'Kom initiative which was a media campaign to encourage incorporation of simple exercises into the Emirati lifestyle. The World's shortest marathon of 1 km was launched to prove how easy it was to adopt healthy options in daily life. This provided awareness to a wide range of people about [WHO standards](#) that adults should exercise at an average of 30 minutes daily to create a health culture in the community.

Healthy Restaurant Initiative

With more and more people opting to eat outside, this initiative aimed to encourage restaurants to provide healthier options for their menu items along with the nutritional information that will help individuals analyze the food they eat. This will help individuals choose healthier options when they eat out.

The Dubai Fitness Challenge 30X30

Launched in 2017, by Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed, Crown Prince of Dubai the [Dubai Fitness Challenge \(DFC\)](#) is an initiative to transform Dubai into the most active city in the world. DFC challenges everyone in the city to complete 30 minutes of activity a day for 30 days. It also hosts a month-long exciting fitness events and wellness-focused entertainment to keep Dubai up and on its feet. This initiative has seen huge success in bringing together all the people of Dubai as one community that champions and advocates a healthy lifestyle.

2021 Healthy Children Campaign

Under the umbrella of the [National Program for Government Communication \(NPGC\)](#) a campaign called “**2021 Healthy Children**” was launched. This campaign aimed to raise

awareness about healthy lifestyles of Emirati children and ensure a better healthy life for future generations. Various activities all over the UAE were conducted such as the “Let’s Walk” march at Abu Dhabi Corniche which was led by H. H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, along with Lt. General H.H. Sheikh Saif bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, H.H. Sheikh Mansour Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs.

[Diabetes - Diagnosis & Treatment](#)

UAE is at the risk of diabetes rising at a faster rate than the rest of MENA region and the rest of the world. Rapid economic growth, sedentary lifestyles and unhealthy diets in the UAE are all risk factors, leading to the number of people with diabetes expecting to double to 2.2 million by 2040. UAE has created many initiatives to fight this trend and ensure that more awareness is created about diabetes. Among them are regular comprehensive screenings at Primary Health Centers (PHC).

The [Emirates Diabetes Society](#) hosts the Emirates Diabetes & Endocrine Congress, the region's premier platform to provide updates on the recent advances in the ever-changing field of diabetes and endocrine diseases. One of the major landmarks of the UAE, The Burj Al Arab, shines in blue light to highlight the celebration of World Diabetes Day. Walkathons are organized in the different emirates to spread the message "Beat Diabetes".

EDS runs a diabetes clinic on wheels named “Win Over Diabetes”. It is a fully equipped clinic which travels all over the UAE with a team of 3 doctors, 3 nurses and 1 diabetes educator focusing primarily in the rural areas

[Impact](#)

Various initiatives undertaken by the UAE government has ensured that the country is on track in achieving the sustainable development goal of promoting healthy lifestyles in creating a pathway for good health.

A [study conducted by Dubai Health Authority in 2018](#) revealed that the trend of obesity declined over 2014-2015, 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 showing about 1.2% total reduction in the number of obese children in Dubai.

The [International Diabetes Federation](#) reported that in 2014, 19 per cent people were diabetic in the UAE. That significantly reduced to 15.6 per cent in 2017. Constant monitoring and continuous innovation in delivering world-class services has made significant changes in promoting healthy lifestyles in UAE.

Conclusion

An environment which promotes and encourages adoption of healthy lifestyles ensures that people can win over major diseases associated with them. UAE has always been a nation that champions the cause of providing a holistic health community for its residents and citizens.

References

[World Health Organization](#)

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[Sheikh Mohammed Quotes](#)

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[Ministry of Health and Prevention Initiatives](#)

[Emirates Diabetes Society](#)

[International Journal of Growth and Development](#)