



## TRINIDAD & TOBAGO MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

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### **T&TMA Observance of World Obesity Day 2026: 8 Billion Reasons to Act on Obesity**

The Trinidad and Tobago Medical Association (T&TMA) commends the collaborative effort between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education in their recent launch of policies to guide in-school nutrition. The Association supports the call being made by both the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education to ensure healthy food and drink options are available to the children attending our nation's schools, as we reduce sugar consumption and lower obesity rates among the paediatric population in Trinidad and Tobago.

Today on March 4th 2026, the T&TMA stands with our local, regional and international communities in recognition of World Obesity Day 2026: 8 Billion Reasons to Act on Obesity, driving action against the global obesity epidemic.

The World Obesity Federation estimates that over one billion people are living with obesity worldwide and by 2035, half of the global population will be overweight or obese. There is particular concern for children and adolescents, since childhood obesity has been noted to be increasing rapidly, with low and middle income countries mainly affected. Alarmingly, the Healthy Caribbean Coalition has noted that three million children and adolescents, between 5 and 19 years old, are overweight in the Caribbean.

The consumption of an unhealthy diet has been highlighted as a key contributing factor to childhood obesity. The increasing rates of childhood obesity and this key contributing factor have prompted the World Health Organization to introduce policies and interventions to create healthy school-food environments.

The Association strongly recommends that during the implementation of local in-school nutrition policies by the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education, there is consultation with all the stakeholders who will be impacted by the new policies – product manufacturers, product distributors, cafeteria operators, parents, etc.



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Additionally, it should be recognized that the introduction of these policies may reduce the current options in suitable food and drink available to children within their schools' cafeterias. It is hoped that with the execution of a step-wise approach to implementation of the in-school nutrition policies and consultation with stakeholders, product manufacturers may be allowed time to produce and supply policy-acceptable food and drink options at an affordable price to the schools' cafeterias.

The T&TMA reaffirms its unwavering commitment to working with stakeholders to stem the tide of rising obesity rates and prioritize the prevention of non-communicable diseases, through strategic policy implementation and public education.

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