

Jordan forms National NCD Committee to Implement National NCD Strategy

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AMMAN - Jordan is committed to implementing the National Strategy for Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD), as immediate action is required to create public awareness about NCDs, a Ministry of Health official said on Tuesday.

Mohammad Tarawneh, director of the ministry's non-communicable diseases directorate, said the Kingdom presented its national strategy to the UN in September, and "we have an obligation to start implementing this strategy". He noted that to ensure cooperation among health sector institutions and other concerned parties, Minister of Health Abdul Latif Wreikat formed a committee yesterday to develop and oversee an action plan to implement the strategy.

The committee "will also present a biannual report to the minister and an annual report to the prime minister on the implementation of the strategy", Tarawneh said. The committee is presided over by Kamel Ajlouni, director general of the National Centre for Diabetes, Endocrinology and Genetics, with members representing both the public and private health sectors, in addition to the Royal Medical Services, university hospitals, the education and awqaf ministries, and concerned organisations.

According to Tarawneh, the strategy is not time-bound and focuses on creating awareness on means to reduce the prevalence of chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and obesity. "Although we do not have accurate figures on the cost of treating these diseases, the high prevalence of NCDs indicates high expenses," Tarawneh told The Jordan Times over the phone yesterday.

According to recent figures, 250,000 Jordanians, or 7.5 per cent of the population, currently have diabetes - a figure that is projected to rise to three million by 2050. "The high prevalence of diabetes in the Kingdom is related to the unhealthy lifestyles many Jordanians lead," Ajlouni said in a prior statement. "The increase in the number of cases is not due to genetic abnormalities or family histories... The majority of cases are related to unhealthy lifestyles," he added.

As for other chronic diseases, the ministry's figures show that 30 per cent of Jordanians suffer from high blood pressure, 38 per cent have high cholesterol, and 39.8 per cent are obese. "All these diseases are connected to unhealthy lifestyles," Tarawneh explained, noting that the strategy recommends encouraging exercise, improving physical education in schools, and prohibiting advertisements for unhealthy food. In addition, the strategy recommends providing training for preachers to educate the public about risks of developing chronic diseases and means of prevention. By Khetam Malkawi

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