

Module for ASHA on Non-Communicable Diseases

Introduction

In the last ten years, we have seen improvements in the health of mothers and children. This includes an increase in institutional deliveries, immunization coverage, improvements in infant and child health, and reductions in maternal and infant deaths. You, as an ASHA, have played a large role in making this happen.

You were selected as an ASHA to serve your community and improve health outcomes for the people. So far, you have been trained on topics related to maternal, new born, child health, nutrition and infectious diseases. You were also trained on issues such as improving communication skills, negotiation and building community relationships, reaching the most vulnerable or remote populations, and on addressing violence against women in the community.

The country has made progress in improving maternal and child health and communicable diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and leprosy. But now, we face another set of health challenges. You must have heard in your community that people complain of having high blood pressure or high blood sugar or suffering from cancers.

These complaints are heard across the country. More and more people are affected by diseases like heart attacks and stroke, cancer, asthma and breathing difficulty, mental disorder injuries, kidney, liver and other problems. These diseases are called Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).

This module will tell you more about these NCDs. It will also guide you on how you can help people in the community in preventing NCDs and in identifying and supporting those who are affected by them. However, you must remember that your efforts on community prevention and control of communicable diseases and in improving maternal child health, continue to be important.

Let us first understand what we mean by Non-Communicable Diseases?

NCDs are diseases of long duration. These are non-infectious conditions that cannot be transmitted to other individuals. Some NCDs progress slowly or cause chronic symptoms requiring long term care and control while others progress rapidly. They affect adult men and women but children are vulnerable as well. People may appear healthy but still suffer from these conditions.

One of the most serious concerns about NCDs is that they affect people in the productive years of their life. They also cause “premature deaths” - that is, a death occurring before the average life expectancy. Though NCDs can affect a person at any age, older individuals are more vulnerable to NCDs.