

HEALTH MATTERS

Ezempilo

FREE

EDUCATE || INFORM || EMPOWER

OCTOBER • 2014



CIRCUMCISION

DON'T
GET LEFT
BEHIND!



health

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Health
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Fighting Disease, Fighting Poverty, Giving Hope

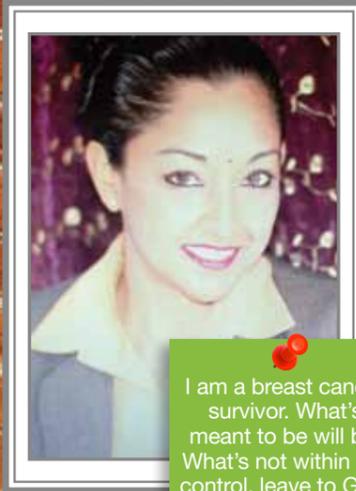


Breast Cancer Awareness

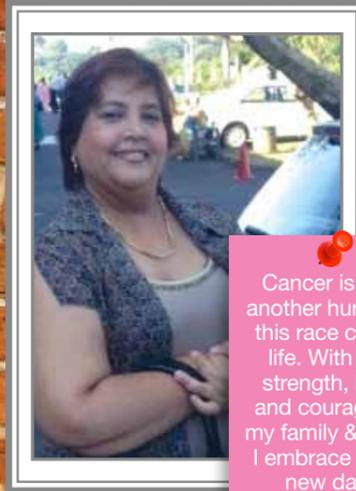
Early detection is key...



Remain focussed during treatment and ask your oncologist all that you want to know. Don't deny your feelings, accept support from family and friends and do not give up!



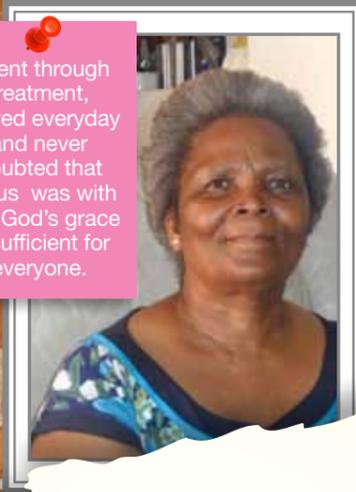
I am a breast cancer survivor. What's meant to be will be. What's not within our control, leave to God.



Cancer is just another hurdle in this race called life. With the strength, love and courage of my family & God, I embrace each new day.



Cancer can be beaten and once the fight is won, you emerge stronger and more appreciative of life. Here is me post treatment, traveling to India as I promised myself I would while under treatment 2 years ago.



I went through treatment, prayed everyday and never doubted that Jesus was with me. God's grace is sufficient for everyone.



You don't know how strong you are until being strong is the only option you have.

Supporting the **FIGHTERS**
Admiring the **SURVIVORS**
Honouring the **TAKEN**,
and Never, Ever Giving up **HOPE**



**BREAST
CANCER
AWARENESS**



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Message from...

**KZN Health MEC,
Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo**



A **S YOU ARE READING** this column, I would like to ask you to pause and ask yourself two questions: have you ever imagined what it would be like to be blind? Are you doing enough to take care of this profoundly precious asset called eyesight? Our busy lifestyles often mean that we are so preoccupied with making a living that we end up neglecting our health. We put our bodies under so much strain while hoping they will always function the way we need and expect them to. But reality is quite different. And if we don't take care of our bodies, our health is bound to be negatively affected.

OCTOBER IS EYE CARE AWARENESS MONTH and if you haven't been taking care of your eyesight, it is never too late to start. Everyone with eye problems should visit our health facilities for early screening, examination and treatment. Children complaining of poor vision should be seen by ophthalmic staff as early as possible. All those suffering from diabetes mellitus and hypertension should have their eyes tested every six months to avoid complications. People with high pressure in their eyes (glaucoma) should always take their eye drops to avoid blindness. White dot / cataract is removable under general anesthesia and that those affected should visit their nearest facility especially if their vision has become blurred. Those over 40 years of age should have their eyes tested at least once a year.

OCTOBER IS ALSO BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH, a reminder to South Africans to take testing and self-examination seriously. One in 35 women in South Africa will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime

according to figures from the South African National Registry. A recent study published by medical journal Lancet predicts that South Africa could see an increase of 78% in the number of cancer cases by 2030. Startling as these statistics are, the good news is that breast cancer, as with other types of cancers, is treatable when detected early.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST, I would like to also thank all individuals, parents and guardians who have responded positively to our campaign to fight the spread of HIV and Aids through Medical Male Circumcision. We as the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health have once again resumed our Medical Male Circumcision camps throughout the province during October. Our target is to circumcise 2.5 million males by 2016. Recently, evidence has shown that not as many people as we had hoped have come forward to get circumcised. We believe this is due to a number of factors, including misinformation, myths and negative stereotypes. I would like to take this opportunity to plead with all the people of KwaZulu-Natal to give MMC a chance. MMC has been scientifically proven to decrease the chances of HIV infection by up to 60%. Given KZN's reputation as the "epicenter" of HIV over the years, any intervention aimed at reducing the impact of the epidemic deserves our support. Male circumcision is key if we are to win the fight to curb the spread of HIV and Aids and have an Aids-free generation by 2030. The target of 2.5 million seems high. But, like our father, the late great former President Nelson Mandela once said, it always seems impossible until it is done. I am confident that with your full support, it will be done.

God bless!



inside



BREAST CANCER



CIRCUMCISION



TRADITIONAL AFRICAN FOOD



SALUTING OUR HEALTH WORKERS

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Your suggestions and comments are welcome, and if you have been impressed by a health worker who provided an outstanding service, let us know and we will feature them!
CONTACT US on 031 562 9803, write to us on PO Box 25439, Gateway 4321 or email editor@ezempilohealthmatters.co.za

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BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

DO NOT WAIT UNTIL YOU HAVE LUMPS.

LEARN TO DO SELF-EXAMINATION OF YOUR BREASTS- YOUR HEALTH WORKER CAN SHOW YOU HOW.

BREAST CANCER IS PREVENTABLE, TREATABLE, AND BEATABLE!

THE BEST PROTECTION IS EARLY DETECTION!

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OCTOBER 29

NATIONAL IODINE DEFICIENCY DISORDER DAY

WARNING!
 Iodine deficiency in pregnant and breastfeeding women can cause brain damage in the developing baby.

Mothers are often so busy taking care of their children that they forget to take care of themselves. This day is a reminder to all women, especially those who are pregnant, to eat healthily and make sure they get enough iodine.

Why is it important?

Iodine is a chemical in the thyroid gland which helps control heartbeat, cholesterol and weight, balances our hormones and helps to process food. Iodine deficiency is more common in women because their thyroid gland is twice as big as that of men.

Effects on a baby

The lack of iodine in a pregnant woman can lead to the following:

- Risk of losing the baby or a still birth
- Risk of premature delivery
- The baby may be born with certain abnormalities including brain damage, problems with growth, hearing and talking
- Even a small lack of iodine during pregnancy, can lead to low intelligence in children.

Signs that you aren't getting enough iodine

Consult your clinic if you are pregnant and experience any of the following, which may be a sign that your body is not getting enough iodine:

- Tiredness – more than usual
- Cold hands and feet
- Poor concentration and memory
- Enlarged thyroid gland

Make sure you are getting enough iodine

Normally a person only requires a teaspoon of iodine in a lifetime, but because iodine cannot be stored for long periods our bodies, we need to take in tiny amounts often. The best way to increase your iodine levels is to eat more seafood and fish. Other foods that contain iodine are eggs and dairy products, including milk, cheese and yogurt, onions and radishes.

Foods pregnant women should avoid

Avoid foods like cabbage, peanuts, soy flour, brussels sprouts, cauliflower and broccoli as these slow down your iodine.



Don't eat more salt than usual and try to buy iodized salt instead of normal sea salt.



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OCTOBER is...

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

**NEW
STUDY**

Breastfeeding
reduces risk of
breast cancer

Most of us are aware of breast cancer, but did you know that a particular type of breast cancer affects mostly African women? It's known as triple-negative breast cancer and affects African women three times more than any other group of women.

Triple-negative cancer is a group of cancers together and is the most difficult to treat, even with high doses of chemotherapy which is used to treat cancers.

Latest Research on Breastfeeding

The good news is that a new international study has found that African women who breastfeed can reduce their risk of this type of breast cancer. An American study found that breast cancer was more likely to affect women who had given birth and who had not breastfed their baby. Women who breastfed their babies actually received protection against this deadly form of breast cancer.

Who is at risk of breast cancer?

While older women are at a higher risk, younger women can also be affected. Women whose mothers, sisters or grandmothers have had the disease are more at risk. A woman who has never given birth or has a baby after the age of 35 is at greater risk and women who drink two or more drinks of alcohol a day are at risk too!

What are the Symptoms?

- A lump in or near the breast or armpit area – most lumps are normal, but if they feel unusual have them checked!
- The breast changes in size or shape
- The skin of the breast dimples
- The nipple turns inward
- There is an unusual discharge from the nipple
- The skin on the breast, nipple or the dark area surrounding the nipple is scaly, red or swollen
- The breast skin has the look or feel of an orange peel

Treatment

The three major types of treatment for cancer are surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

- Surgery is needed to remove the abnormal growth and is successfully used to prevent cancer from spreading.
- Chemotherapy is done by inserting a drip into a vein in your arm, to attack or kill cancer cells.
- Radiotherapy uses a type of laser to destroy cancer cells.

EARLY DETECTION SAVES LIVES!

Every woman needs to be aware that breast cancer can strike at any time, but the earlier it is found, the better your chance of beating it. To get diagnosed early, it's important to do simple, self-examination of your breasts regularly so that you can pick up any change in your breasts and have it checked at your clinic. Do a breast self-examination once a month during your period and at the same time of day every month as follows:

- Lie down and put your right arm behind your head. Lying down makes it much easier to feel all the breast tissue.
- Use your finger pads of your three middle fingers on your left hand to feel for lumps in the right breast, going all over.
- Start by feeling the tissue closest to the skin; then a little bit harder to feel a little deeper; and press to feel the tissue closest to your chest.
- Repeat the exam on your left breast, putting your left arm behind your head and using the finger pads of your right hand to do the exam.
- Stand in front of a mirror, look at your breasts for any changes of size, shape, contour, dimpling, or redness of the nipple or breast skin.
- Check each underarm while sitting up or standing and with your arm only slightly raised so you can easily feel in this area.

Treating cancer has come a long way. Go for regular check ups and REMEMBER: the earlier problems are detected, the better your chances of survival.



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NEWS

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LAUNCH OF BIRTH CERTIFICATE REGISTRATION AT HOSPITALS

EVERY BABY BORN in a Government hospital in KwaZulu-Natal will receive a birth certificate before they leave the institution, thanks to a new online birth registration system launched this month by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo together with Home Affairs Minister Malusi Gigaba together. Welcoming the launch of the system at Durban's Addington Hospital, MEC Dhlomo said the system will be rolled out across all health facilities in the province. "This system will help to expedite access to Government-sponsored social services like child support grants while curtailing Birth Certificate fraud," he said. The province currently has 53 hospitals that offer Maternity Services, including 39 which are directly linked to the Department of Home Affairs.

See well, read well, pass well, says MEC

MORE THAN 3000 CHILDREN in the poorest areas of KwaZulu-Natal have been screened for eye health, says MEC Dhlomo.

Addressing stakeholders at this month's World Sight Day event at Inkosi Albert Luthuli Hospital, MEC Dhlomo paid tribute to health workers and optometry staff for volunteering their time and resources to visit many underserved communities to provide eye care services. "This is what we call patriotism; the love for your country and commitment to the marginalised communities is unquestionable and assist in our quest of giving access to quality healthcare for all," said Dhlomo.

The Department's mobile eye vehicles has been effective in treating eye conditions and screening the eye health of learners in schools, added Dhlomo. The mobile units are all based at NHI pilot Districts including uMgungundlovu and uMzinyathi District and includes an optometrist and assisted by a team of workers focussing on eye care services.

Welcoming efforts by the University of KwaZulu-Natal to support the global call to prevent blindness, especially in children, Dhlomo said: "I was very excited to learn that the Department of Optometry at UKZN decided to prioritise students who battle financially by organising sponsorships for them. I totally support and embrace the notion behind the noble action that says: 'good eye health and vision is essential for the academic success of university students.' I also now take it upon myself to replicate the motto of See Well, Read Well, and Pass Well to be used by our School Health Teams as they traverse across the Province screening and treating school children on ailments that inhibit their ability to learn." Stressing the importance of early detection to prevent blindness, MEC has urged the following:

- All people with eye problems should visit public health facilities for early screening, examination and treatment.
- Children complaining of poor vision should be seen by ophthalmic staff as early as possible.
- All people with diabetes mellitus and hypertension should have their eyes tested every six months to avoid complications.
- People with high pressure in their eyes (glaucoma) should always take their eye drops to avoid going blind.
- White dot /cataract is removable under general anaesthesia and that those affected should visit their nearest facility especially if their vision has become blurred.
- Those over 40 years of age should have their eyes tested at least once a year.



PHOTOGRAPH: Rogan Ward



388,000
males
successfully
circumcised
in KZN

HAVE YOU BEEN CIRCUMCISED YET?

DON'T DELAY It reduces the spread of HIV by 60%!

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health has kicked off its Circumcision Camps for the third quarter of 2014 and MEC of Health, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo has urged all young men to take up the call from His Majesty, King Goodwill Zwelithini to get circumcised.

If you're still in doubt about circumcision, consider the following facts:

- Decreases chances of HIV infection by 60%
- Decreases chances of transmission of Herpes type 2
- Decreases chances of transmission of Human Papilloma virus (HPV)
- Increase genital hygiene which means less chance of picking up other diseases too.

What makes KZN circumcision successful

The Department of Health in KZN has successfully circumcised more than 388,000 males in the province since 2010, without a single death occurring as a result of the procedure. The reason for this success is largely due to the training given by the Department to over 500 health practitioners including doctors, on the procedures of circumcision, including use of the Tara Klamp. In his report on the circumcision campaign in the province, MEC Dhlomo said he was encouraged by the positive response to the campaign, which included more than 10 roving teams. "We also appreciate the support from NGO's which are assisting with the expansion of the circumcision programme in the Province. This means that, in addition to Male Medical Circumcision, we also screen for diabetes, hypertension, HIV, and sexually transmitted infections, while initiates are also engaged in discussions aimed at fostering good behaviour," says Dhlomo.

Centre of Excellence

Two years ago, in an effort to further promote and strengthen the MMC programme in the Province, the Department established the KwaZulu-Natal Medical Male Circumcision Centre of Excellence in Pietermaritzburg to ensure high standards of training for those carrying out circumcision. Every male in the province can be assured of receiving the highest standard of service when being circumcised by someone approved by the Department of Health.

MMC CAMPS WITHIN KZN UNTIL OCTOBER 30 2014:

- **ETHEKWINI** (Danganya Clinic, October 23 and Molweni Clinic, October 24)
- **UGU** (Morrison's Clinic, October 18; Port Shepstone Prison, October 19; Mabiya High School, October 25 and St Andrew's Hospital, October 31)
- **UTHUKELA** (St Chads Community Health Centre (CHC), October 16; Zwelisha Clinic, October 17; St Chads CHC, October 23; Ntabamhlophe Clinic, October 24; Emmaus Hospital, October 24; St Chads CHC, October 30)
- **UTHUNGULU** (Tisand Technical School, October 20, October 21)

MORE FAST FACTS ABOUT CIRCUMCISION

- Boys under 18 need parental consent.
- Medical circumcision is the safest and most hygienic way to get circumcised.
- HIV testing is recommended but not a prerequisite.
- Circumcision is performed to international standards by specially trained doctors, nurses or other health practitioners, using an approved method.
- Circumcision is done under local anaesthetic and takes no longer than 30 minutes for a surgical procedure and just two minutes using the Tara Klamp.
- Pain relief medication is available for free
- Men should abstain from sex for 6 weeks after the procedure, until the wound has healed. Before the wound has healed, the risk of HIV infection is higher than usual.

What about sex afterwards?

Once circumcised, you still need to use a condom because circumcision does not stop the spread of HIV, but reduces the risk. That means there is still a risk of an HIV positive man infecting his partner, but the risk is reduced by 60% if you are circumcised. To get maximum protection, you must continue to use a condom. It's also important to remember that circumcision does not reduce your risk of HIV infection if you have anal sex.

"...in addition to Male Medical Circumcision, we also screen for diabetes, hypertension, HIV, and sexually transmitted infections, while initiates are also engaged in discussions aimed at fostering good behaviour."

SPEAK TO YOUR NEAREST HOSPITAL OR CLINIC ABOUT USING AN APPROVED CIRCUMCISION EXPERT TO PERFORM YOUR CIRCUMCISION.



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Why choose a western diet...?

WHEN TRADITIONAL AFRICAN FOODS ARE BETTER FOR YOU

HAVE YOU NOTICED how strong our gogos are? They are able to work from morning till night, even when they are tired. Yet many of our younger generation today feel tired and sick after a few hours of work. What makes our elderly so strong? Their secret is in the food they were brought up with: good, healthy, traditional African food which many of us have sadly replaced today today with a western diet as we move into bigger cities, away from traditional family life and into the stress of modern day living.



Ma Tule is 73 years old and still strong as an ox. She walks for at least 30 minutes every day and looks after six grandchildren while their mother works in the city. Gogo has her own vegetable garden in the back of her home and cooks fresh vegetables straight from her crop. "I am healthier than people younger than me and when I tell them it's because I stay away from fast foods they just laugh, but it's true. A western diet is very unhealthy, that's why many of our people today are overweight and suffer diseases such as diabetes and heart problems," she says.



WHAT MAKES AFRICAN FOOD BETTER FOR YOUR HEALTH?

African foods contain a lot of natural vitamins and minerals which help your body fight many diseases. A typical western diet on the other hand, has a lot of added chemicals which harm the body and cause many problems we see today like diabetes, blood pressure and cancer. Encourage your children to be proud of their culture and its tradition of rich, healthy food and use the following to explain to them just how traditional foods are better for you:

AMASI A favourite drink, but did you know that it's a proven fact that children who drink amasi are less likely to suffer from diarrhoea? Amasi also improves the body's immune system and ability to fight diseases.

UJEQE Our well known steamed bread is made by boiling crushed green maize or sorghum. Green maize is easily digested by the body, helps with colon function and is a healthier alternative to normal shop-bought bread.

SAMP and BEANS Beans are a major source of protein and a good source of fibre which lowers cholesterol and stabilizes blood sugar. Beans are also high in folic acid which can help protect against many health problems including heart disease and stroke.

IMIFINO (wild leafy vegetables) Trying to lose weight? Forget paying for treatments and pills that don't necessary work! Try eating a nutritious meal made with Imifino. These wild herbs help with weight control and reduce the risk of cancers too.

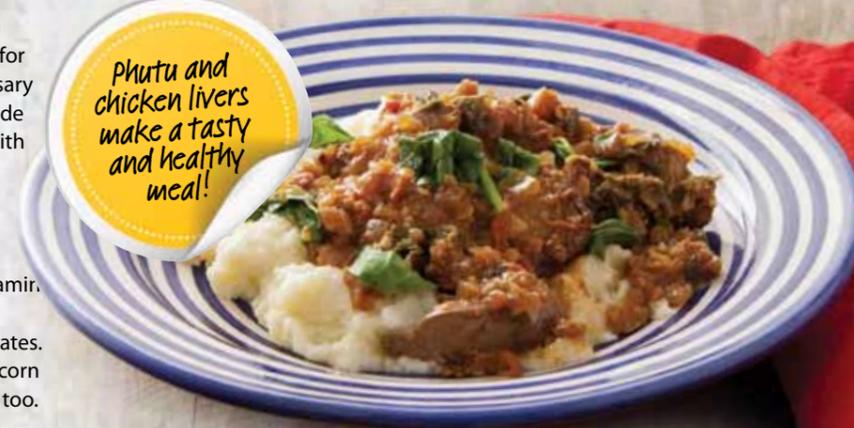
SWEET POTATOES and MADUMBI Rich in vitamin A, vitamin C and vitamin B6, and they're a good source of dietary fibre and carbohydrates. They also contain more protein than corn and can be mashed up for baby food too.

TRIFE Get the children to appreciate this early in life, as it is rich in proteins. It also promotes red blood cell function by helping to make a protein that these cells need to transport oxygen around the body.

PHUTU One of our staple porridges, but did you know that the grains in phutu are gluten-free and are a good wheat substitute for sufferers of celiac disease (a digestive disease which can damage the small intestine).

AMAHEWU Why choose fizzy drinks loaded with sugars that harm your health? Encourage your family to enjoy amahewu which is a drink made of mealie pap and wheat flour. It is natural, fresh and contains no harmful additives.

Phutu and chicken livers make a tasty and healthy meal!



30 OCTOBER IS AFRICAN FOOD AND NUTRITION DAY

More Benefits of Traditional Foods

Still unsure? Here's more reason to be proud of our rich culture of traditional African food. They also do the following:

- Improve digestion
- Aid recovery after the use of antibiotics
- Reduce rates of diarrhoea
- Help prevent chronic diseases like diabetes
- Are low in salt content

Live a longer, healthier life...
choose a traditional African diet!



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Musa Njoko

20 YEARS LIVING WITH HIV AND STRONGER THAN EVER



Twenty years ago, she was among the first black South African women to publicly say she has HIV. Many thought she would not make it. As a singer, even record companies in the country refused to sign her up, saying she would 'die before they made their money from her'. Yet, she is alive and well, 20 years later and a successful singer (she went on to establish her own record company), fashion designer and devoted mother. Speaking to more than 1000 women at a recent event hosted by the Department of Health in KwaZulu-Natal to pay tribute to all their female health staff, Njoko inspired those present.



HER STORY...

Njoko was first diagnosed with HIV in 1994 and was told she had three months to live. "I was told that I would see Christmas of 1994 only if I was lucky. But I have now seen 19 Christmases. My son was only two years old at that time. On the 29th November this year he will be turning 22. But all of this is not just a miracle," explained the lively Njoko. She emphasized the importance of using medication in the right manner, adding that she never forgets her container of ARVs where ever she goes and that her faith in God has helped her through the years. "God promised not to leave nor forsake us. As I stand in front of you, I am a testimony to this. I am also proof of what our South African government has done for us."

While stressing that she is not proud of the fact that she is HIV positive, Njoko also doesn't pity herself. "I am not a liability to my family and community at large. I am proudly black and African. HIV does not define me. If HIV makes me who I am, then it must be good looking!" she says to applause and laughter from the audience. On a serious note, she called on all women to take care of themselves at all times.

"It's our duty to look after ourselves as well as our loved ones. In the past 20 years, there is not one person who can claim to have been infected with HIV by me. I have made it my personal duty to ensure that in my family, my community, our country and worldwide, that HIV stops with me. You can also do that."

She said that when she was involved in a car accident in 2003, she chose to alert those who tried to help her without the use of gloves that they must be careful.

"When we were involved in the accident all I remember is seeing a lot of blood, broken glass and blood. People who came to assist me were stopped by me as I told them that I have HIV. I advised them to use the plastics I had in my boot. I still do that."

She finished off by giving the ladies a challenge. "Women are still at a high risk of contracting HIV. My question is, what are they doing to stop the spread of HIV? We should stop being victims. Change your lives, not only for yourselves, but for your children as well, seeing as God still has a lot installed for you."



"I am not a liability to my family and community at large. I am proudly black and African. HIV does not define me. If HIV makes me who I am, then it must be good looking!"



Musa Njoko celebrates women at a Department of Health Tribute to Women event at Addington Hospital



**THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN KZN SALUTES
MUSA NJOKO AND ALL THOSE WHO COLLECTIVELY
FIGHT THE BATTLE AGAINST HIV AND AIDS –
TOGETHER WE HAVE TURNED THE TIDE!**



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OCTOBER

OCTOBER 15-19 National Nutrition Week/National Obesity Week

Being underweight is one of the most common nutritional problems affecting South Africa's preschool children. But studies show that our children are also getting overweight. Let us work harder to ensure we raise a generation of healthy adults.



OCTOBER 20-26 International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week

Lead is a metal which can be dangerous if taken into the body. Brightly coloured toys can also contain dangerous levels of lead, so be careful when buying these as too much lead can affect a person's brain and bones. Read more about this in our comic section.

OCTOBER 16 World Food Day



Food costs are rising and we need to do more as a community to overcome food shortages. Education, skills training and even setting up community vegetable gardens are all ways we can work to end poverty.



OCTOBER 1 International Day for Older Persons

Older people make major contributions to society, through volunteer work, sharing their experience and knowledge, caring for grandchildren and even those left orphaned. This day pays tribute to their efforts, so take time to say to show them you care and speak out against all forms of violence on our elderly.

OCTOBER 10 World Mental Health Day

Each year millions of people are diagnosed with a mental health disorder, yet few understand the problem. There is help out there, encourage those with a mental health condition to seek treatment so that they can live productive lives. Mental Health disorders are not a curse!



OCTOBER 12

World Arthritis Day
Arthritis is a disease that causes pain and loss of movement of the joints. Although there is no cure, it is a manageable condition.

OCTOBER 9 Partnership against AIDS anniversary

South Africans with HIV and AIDS are living longer and healthier lives than ever before thanks to our collective efforts. This week is a reminder of how far we've come when working together to address AIDS.

Together we are stronger.



OCTOBER 23 National Iodine Deficiency Disorder Day

Iodine is an important mineral needed for growth, especially in pregnant women because it helps a baby develop in the womb. Speak to your clinic about how to make sure your body is getting enough iodine.

OCTOBER 28-3 NOV World Stroke Day

About 60 people die in South Africa every day from a stroke. Speak to your health worker about ways you can prevent a stroke.



OCTOBER 16 World Spine Day

Back pain is the number one reason for days off work. Learn more about ways like correct posture when lifting heavy goods which are simple ways you can avoid back injuries.

OCTOBER 17 World Trauma Day

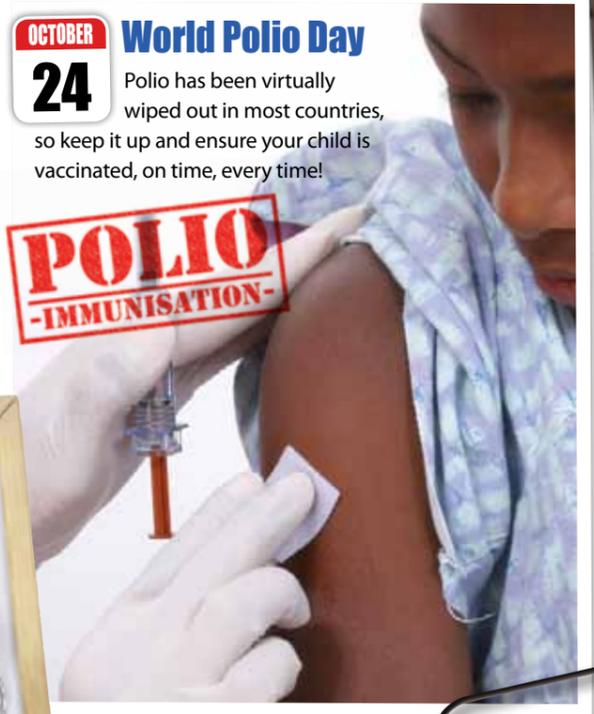
Trauma is a major cause of death and disability across the world. This day focuses on how to deal with the most critical moments when we experience trauma.

OCTOBER 20 World Osteoporosis Day

Osteoporosis is a disease of the bone affecting mainly women over the age of 50 and is treatable.

OCTOBER 24 World Polio Day

Polio has been virtually wiped out in most countries, so keep it up and ensure your child is vaccinated, on time, every time!



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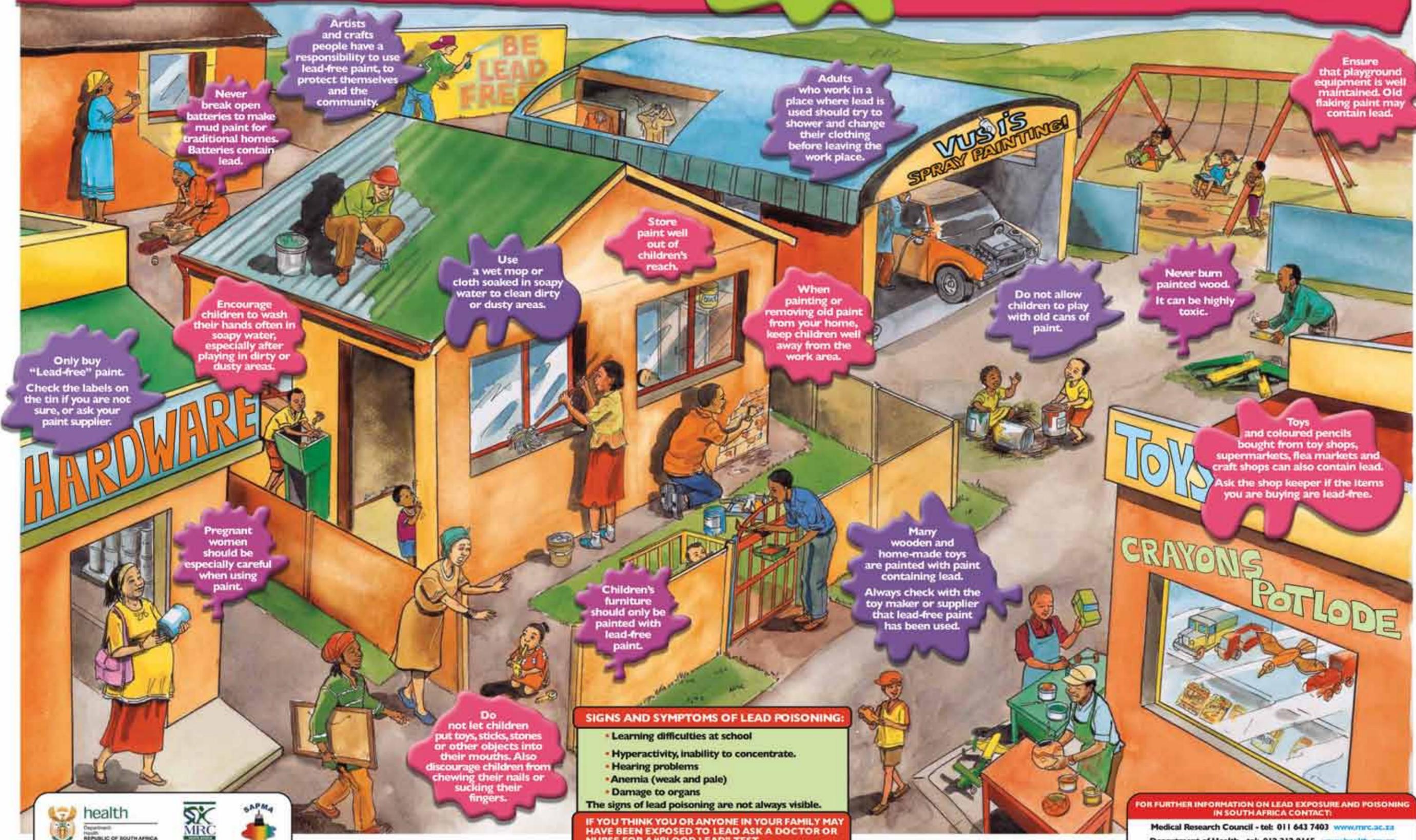
LEAD IN PAINT

AN INVISIBLE POISON!

Lead poisoning is the cause of many illnesses.

Paint can contain lead and is a major cause of lead poisoning in many children and adults.

This picture shows the many ways we are exposed to lead in paint in our daily lives. Use the information on this poster to protect yourself and your family from lead poisoning.



Artists and crafts people have a responsibility to use lead-free paint, to protect themselves and the community.

Never break open batteries to make mud paint for traditional homes. Batteries contain lead.

Adults who work in a place where lead is used should try to shower and change their clothing before leaving the work place.

Ensure that playground equipment is well maintained. Old flaking paint may contain lead.

Store paint well out of children's reach.

Use a wet mop or cloth soaked in soapy water to clean dirty or dusty areas.

When painting or removing old paint from your home, keep children well away from the work area.

Do not allow children to play with old cans of paint.

Never burn painted wood. It can be highly toxic.

Only buy "Lead-free" paint. Check the labels on the tin if you are not sure, or ask your paint supplier.

Encourage children to wash their hands often in soapy water, especially after playing in dirty or dusty areas.

Toys and coloured pencils bought from toy shops, supermarkets, flea markets and craft shops can also contain lead. Ask the shop keeper if the items you are buying are lead-free.

Pregnant women should be especially careful when using paint.

Many wooden and home-made toys are painted with paint containing lead. Always check with the toy maker or supplier that lead-free paint has been used.

Children's furniture should only be painted with lead-free paint.

Do not let children put toys, sticks, stones or other objects into their mouths. Also discourage children from chewing their nails or sucking their fingers.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF LEAD POISONING:

- Learning difficulties at school
- Hyperactivity, inability to concentrate.
- Hearing problems
- Anemia (weak and pale)
- Damage to organs

The signs of lead poisoning are not always visible.

IF YOU THINK YOU OR ANYONE IN YOUR FAMILY MAY HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO LEAD ASK A DOCTOR OR NURSE FOR A "BLOOD LEAD" TEST.