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OCTOBER • 2015



McCord Eye Hospital A new era in health

Breast cancer ● Salt danger ● Circumcision



health
Department:
Health
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL



FIGHTING DISEASE, FIGHTING POVERTY, GIVING HOPE

Breast Cancer Awareness



If you have...

- Swelling of all or part of a breast (even if no lump is felt)
- Skin irritation or dimpling
- Breast or nipple pain
- Nipple retraction (turning inward)
- Nipple discharge (other than breast milk)
- Redness, scaliness or thickening of the nipple or breast skin

...visit your nearest clinic or hospital

EARLY DETECTION SAVES LIVES. GET TESTED



health

Department:
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PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

FIGHTING DISEASE, FIGHTING POVERTY, GIVING HOPE

Message from...

**KZN Health HOD,
Dr Sifiso Mtshali**



THE DEPARTMENT HAS BEEN EXCEPTIONALLY BUSY this month as we approach year end. Amongst the many exciting deliverables was the historic launch of McCord Provincial Eye Hospital – previously known as McCords Hospital which is a 100 year old Institution. This is the dawn of a new era for the hospital, as services are aimed at improving a critical area of care in our Province – eye health. The Hospital will serve over 500 outpatients daily as well as 15-20 cataract surgeries on a daily basis. With more than 3.5 million children in the Province suffering from eye problems, the Department felt it was important to utilise the hospital in an effective and resourceful manner that will benefit those who need the services the most. Considering that up to 80% of blindness can be prevented, we owe it to the people of this Province to do everything we can to reduce the incidence of blindness. The new look McCord Provincial Eye Hospital will work towards improving eye health through preventative and curative measures in this world class facility. We are now seeing the return on our investment in this historic institution which was taken over by the Department at a stage when it was about to close down.

WITH OCTOBER BEING BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH, I would also like to take this opportunity to appeal to all our women in our Province to know the signs of breast cancer and to ensure they go for regular annual check-

ups for breast and cervical cancer. Like most cancers, early detection is key as it gives you a fighting chance at the disease!

AS PART OF THE THEME ON ELDERLY AWARENESS this month I would like to pay special tribute to all our elderly, especially those who continue to share their wisdom and offer care to society in general. As the Head of Department of Health, it saddens me that many of our elderly citizens are victims of violence and trauma, often in their own homes. As a society, we must do more to break the silence, stop the violence and protect our women, children and elderly.

FINALLY, A HUGE THANK YOU to all those who responded positively to our campaign to fight the spread of HIV and AIDS through our Medical Male Circumcision programme. The high number of clients reached proves that our message on the benefits of the circumcision continues to be heard across the Province and I look forward to this growing trend. Medical male circumcision has been proven to reduce the spread of HIV by up to 60% and to date we have circumcised close to 605 000 people across the Province – successfully! The Department remains confident that, with your support, we will realise our goal of one day having an AIDS-free Generation. The people of KwaZulu-Natal are our key stakeholders and I look forward to continuing this partnership in health so that together we make this Province the country's pride for positive health outcomes.

God Bless!

inside



EYE CARE



BREAST CANCER



SALT



EMS GUIDE

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With thanks to the following contributors:

- KZN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH: COMMUNICATIONS UNIT
- ZOHRA MOHAMED TEKE (EDITOR)
- THEMBA MNGOMEZULU (DEPARTMENT PHOTOGRAPHER)
- SARA AULD (GRAPHIC DESIGNER)
- DR GUGU MAZIBUKO (TRANSLATOR)

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
- LEARN TO DO SELF-EXAMINATION OF YOUR BREASTS- YOUR HEALTH WORKER CAN
- BREAST CANCER IS PREVENTABLE, TREATABLE,
- THE BEST PROTECTION IS EARLY

Have you been circumcised yet?

Don't delay - it reduces the spread of HIV by 60%!

KZN leads as the safest province in SA for Medical Male Circumcisions



Young men throughout KwaZulu-Natal continue to undergo safe medical circumcisions - reducing the spread of HIV, protecting their partners and themselves and living healthier sexual lives.

What about you? Are you thinking about it but not sure about the risks?

The KZN Department of Health has set up a Centre of Excellence in the province to train health workers across its facilities on how to perform medical male circumcisions and they are ready to answer all your concerns. Thanks to these efforts, the province has not had a single death or botched procedure from its medical circumcisions to date!

Department partnerships make it work

With training given by the Department to over 500 health practitioners on the procedures of circumcision, KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo has also thanked the partnerships which have also made this a success. "We appreciate the support from NGO's which are assisting with the expansion of the circumcision programme in the Province. In addition to the Male Medical Circumcision, the focus is also on screening for diabetes, hypertension,

HIV, Sexually Transmitted Infections and other blood tests, while initiatives are also engaged in discussions aimed at fostering good behaviour," says Dhlomo.

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.

MORE FAST FACTS ON 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 six weeks after the procedure, until the wound has completely healed. Before then, the risk of HIV infection is higher than usual.

SPEAK TO YOUR LOCAL CLINIC ABOUT USING AN APPROVED EXPERT TO PERFORM YOUR CIRCUMCISION.

MEDICAL MALE CIRCUMCISION

KZN HEALTH



health

Department:
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NEWS

Fighting Disease, Fighting Poverty, Giving Hope



KZN TACKLES TB AT SCHOOLS

THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH in KwaZulu-Natal, in partnership with the University Research Corporation (URC) is to intensify its campaign to identify and treat TB cases in schools.

Launching the campaign, KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, said the drive was aimed at reducing the high rates of TB

The Districts with the highest rates of TB in the province include:

- * UGU 1071 per 100 000 population
- * ILEMBE 1057 per 100 000 population
- * UTHUNGULU, ETHEKWINI, UMKHANYAKUDE, ZULULAND and UMGUNGUNDLOVU over 800 TB notification

The campaign will tackle TB in schools through:

- * Increasing knowledge about TB, especially prevention
- * Increase TB case finding by screening and testing for TB
- * Making sure all learners with TB are linked to care
- * Improving treatment adherence.

Through the partnership with URC, the Department will be able to provide 500 000 TB screening tools to be taken home by the learners who will observe family members for 2 weeks and then return the screening tool to school. The Outreach Teams will thereafter collect these completed screening tools and conduct make follow up visits to suspected cases.

"In addition, we will also be targeting the Teacher with TB or Drug Resistant TB as this poses a risk of transmitting the disease to

the class. All teachers need to be aware of the signs and symptoms of TB and encouraged to test early and regularly. Teachers are in strategic position as they can observe daily which learners display any of the symptoms of TB, they are able to identify possible TB suspects and report to the nearest health care facility and assist in treatment support where necessary," added MEC Dhlomo.

"All teachers need to be aware of the signs and symptoms of TB and encouraged to test early and regularly." – MEC Dhlomo

Boost for maternal and child health care

HEALTH FACILITIES ACROSS THE PROVINCE will receive a much needed boost as preparations get underway to welcome 2000 extra hands into facilities.

Graduate nurses across all categories of care were welcomed by MEC Dhlomo as they successfully completed their nursing studies at the KwaZulu-Natal College of Nursing.

The boost in nurses is expected to go a long way in providing much needed support and assistance in reducing the high rates of maternal and child mortality in the province.

The graduates include those from the following categories:

- * Basic and Advance Midwifery
- * Orthopaedic Nursing Science
- * Operating Theatre



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.

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

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



OFFICIAL

McCord Hospital: KZN Eye Care Centre of Excellence

It's been a long road to transform McCord Hospital into a facility which the Department can rightfully use to service people in need. And earlier this month, KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo together with provincial premier, Mr Senzo Mchunu, officially opened the hospital as the new Eye Care Centre of Excellence.

Facility to benefit more than 3.5 million children in the province who suffer from eye problems!

"Many eye health problems are preventable and this will strengthen efforts to raise awareness on eye care and prevention of blindness. We are now able to carry out a high number of cataract procedures which are sorely needed in this province."

— Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo

Why an eye facility?

More than 3.5 million children in KwaZulu-Natal experience eye problems, and, according to Dr Dhlomo, eye clinics are amongst the busiest clinics within general hospitals in the province. So it's no wonder that the Department chose to turn the landmark McCord to service a health challenge which was desperately needed. With equipment and with the high costs involved in eye care equipment, the Department also felt it would be using available resources in an effective way.

When can services be accessed?

The new Eye Centre is immediately available for eye care services in its first phase and is expected to go a long way

Some of the eye care services at the new facility include:

- ★ High volume cataract surgery service with planned 40 operations per day
- ★ Linking secondary, tertiary and outreach eye services to all districts
- ★ Tertiary ophthalmic services
- ★ Optometry and refractive service
- ★ Optical laboratory for production of glasses, contact lens in phases
- ★ Regional Training centre as well as for post graduate students, registrars in Ophthalmology, Ophthalmic nurses and Optometry students through UKZN.
- ★ Primary Health Ccareare clinic
- ★ Outreach and Tele Health and Tele-Ophthalmology service to support the entire province
- ★ Orientation and Mobility service

Taking responsibility for your eye health

Launching the Centre, Dr Dhlomo also called on everyone to:

- ✓ Have their eyes tested
- ✓ Those over 40 years to have their eyes tested by an optometrist twice a year and by an ophthalmologist once a year
- ✓ Seek medical advice immediately if a child complains about eye problems
- ✓ Children under 5 years to have Vitamin A every six months
- ✓ Those with diabetes mellitus and hypertension have eyes tested yearly
- ✓ Cornea donation is vital and can save another person's eye sight
- ✓ Exercise, healthy eating and drinking lots of water

How your eyes reveal your state of health

DID YOU KNOW...? An eye examination can reveal many health issues such as whether you are likely to develop diabetes or blood pressure problems.

It may also surprise you to learn that you could be saved from serious illness by having your eyes tested more often. Regular examination of your eyes by a qualified optometrist may reveal changes in vision, monitor certain conditions of the eye and indicate your general health. **Eyes are sensitive indicators and show up health problems long before there are any other obvious physical symptoms.** During an examination an optometrist can detect conditions such as high blood pressure, hypertension and excess cholesterol. A full eye examination is important in the detection and control of diabetes, because one of the first signs of this disease is erratic vision and a change in prescription - something which is quickly noticed by optometrists, who also check for other eye conditions, including cataracts, glaucoma, spots or floaters and colour deficiency. In this issue we focus on understanding how the eyes play a crucial role in indicating our health.

WHY EYE TESTS ARE IMPORTANT

DIABETES Certain changes around and inside the eye can cause an optometrist to suspect diabetes and send the patient for immediate tests. The blood vessels in the eye are very delicate and are often the first to be affected by diabetes. As these vessels can be viewed directly, your optometrist will be able to detect any diabetic related change. Fluctuating vision (good one day and poor the next) is a common symptom. Generally, diabetes may cause poorer distance vision, but improve close reading vision.

GLAUCOMA Glaucoma is a disease caused when fluid pressure builds up inside the eyeball, damaging the retina and optic nerve (which sends visual information to the brain). Glaucoma is one of the leading causes of blindness and because it is common in people over 40 years of age, regular, full eye examinations are essential for this age group.

CATARACTS The word 'cataract' refers to the total or partial cloudiness of the lens inside your eye. Cataracts can be very small, or large, causing obvious loss of vision. They are most common in people over 55 years of age, but sometimes occur in younger people and even in babies. At present no one knows how to prevent cataracts, but protecting the eyes from UV exposure is recommended.

SPOTS OR FLOATERS

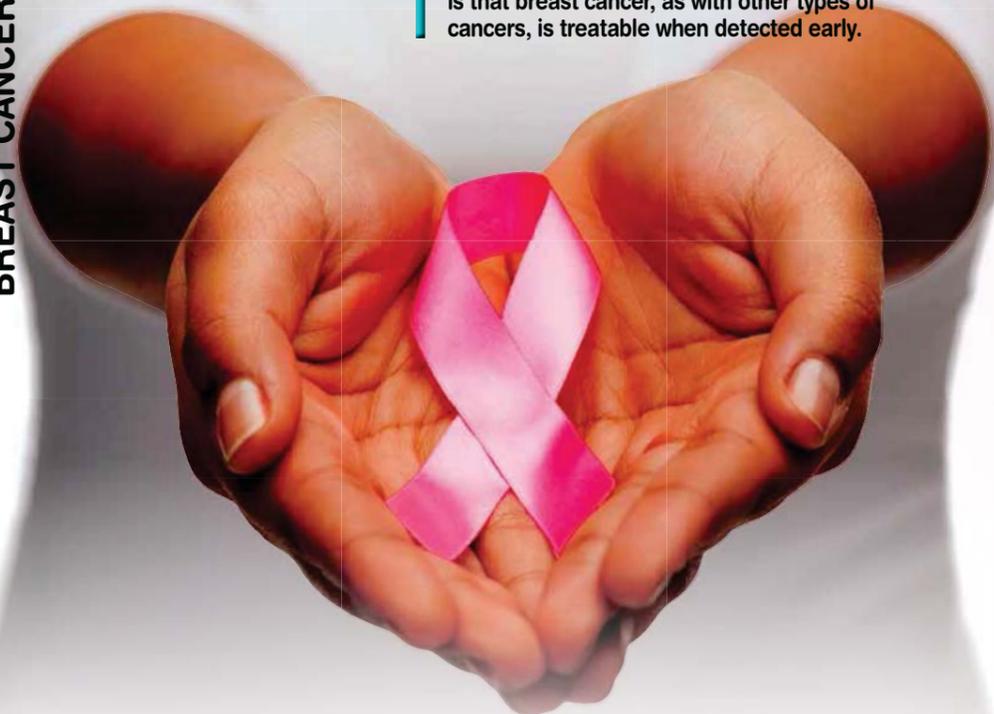
These are small semi-transparent or cloudy particles which are actually inside the eye. They appear in various shapes and sizes, as threads and 'cobwebs' and seem to dart away when you try to look at them. Practically everybody sees a few spots at sometime or the other and they become more obvious as you get older. They are normal and seldom cause blindness, BUT can be a sign of a more serious problem if they occur often.



OCTOBER is BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Looking after your breasts

October is breast cancer awareness month, a reminder to South Africans to take testing and self-examination seriously. The good news is that breast cancer, as with other types of cancers, is treatable when detected early.



Breast cancer is the most prevalent cancer in South Africa followed by cervical cancer. Breast cancer is when cancer develops from breast tissue.

Signs and symptoms of breast cancer

The most common symptom of breast cancer is a new lump or mass. A painless, hard mass that has irregular edges is more likely to be cancerous, but breast cancers can be tender, soft or rounded.

breast change checked by a health care professional experienced in diagnosing breast diseases.

Other possible signs of breast cancer include:

- ★ Swelling of all or part of a breast (even if no distinct lump is felt)
- ★ Skin irritation or dimpling
- ★ Breast or nipple pain
- ★ Nipple retraction (turning inward)
- ★ Redness, scaliness, or thickening of the

Sometimes a breast cancer can spread to lymph nodes under the arm or around the collar bone and cause a lump or swelling there, even before the original tumour in the breast tissue is large enough to be felt. Swollen lymph nodes should also be reported to your doctor.

Although any of these symptoms can be caused by things other than breast cancer, if you have them, they should be reported to your doctor so that he or she can find the cause.

Can breast cancer be found early?

Health experts feel that early detection tests for breast cancer save many thousands of lives each year, and that many more lives could be saved if even more women and their health care providers took advantage of these tests.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EARLY BREAST CANCER DETECTION

- ★ Women over 40 years should have a screening mammogram every year and should continue to do so for as long as they are in good health.
- ★ Women in their 20s and 30s should have a clinical breast exam (CBE) as part of a periodic (regular) health exam by a health professional, at least every 3 years
- ★ Women at high risk for breast cancer based on certain factors should get an MRI and a mammogram every year.

The Department of Health encourages women from as young as 20 to older women to examine their breasts regularly, preferably monthly, and to go for medical check-ups. Breast cancer is easily detectable as a lump often appears in one or both breasts. This lump is usually hard and painless with uneven edges. It's important to get anything unusual checked by a health professional.



5 STEPS TO BREAST SELF EXAMINATION



1 **Begin by looking at your breasts** in the mirror, shoulders straight and your arms on your hips. Look out for:

- ★ Breasts that are their usual size, shape, and colour.
- ★ Breasts that are evenly shaped without visible distortion or swelling. If you see any of the following changes, bring them to your doctor's attention:
 - Dimpling, puckering, or bulging of the skin
 - A nipple that has changed position or an inverted nipple (pushed inward instead of sticking out)
 - Redness, soreness, rash or swelling



2 Now, raise your arms and look for the same changes.

3 While you're at the mirror, look for any signs of fluid coming out of one or both nipples (this could be a watery, milky or yellow fluid or blood).



4 **Next, feel your breasts while lying down**, using your right hand to feel your left breast and then your left hand to feel your right breast. Use a firm, smooth touch with the first few finger pads of your hand, keeping the fingers flat and together. Use a circular motion like you're writing the number 6.

Cover the entire breast from top to bottom, side to side -- from your collarbone to the top of your abdomen, and from your armpit to your cleavage.

Follow a pattern to be sure that you cover the whole breast. You can begin at the nipple, moving in larger and larger circles until you reach the outer edge of the breast. This up-and-down approach seems to work best for most women. Be sure to feel all the tissue from the front to the back of your breasts: for the skin and tissue just beneath, use light pressure; use medium pressure for tissue in the middle of your breasts; use firm pressure for the deep tissue in the back. When you've reached the deep tissue, you should be able to feel down to your ribcage.



5 **Finally, feel your breasts while you are standing or sitting.** Many women find that the easiest way to feel their breasts is when their skin is wet and slippery, so they like to do this step in the shower. Cover your entire breast, using the same movements described in step 4.

MANY BREAST LUMPS ARE HARMLESS, BUT THEY SHOULD ALL BE CHECKED. DO MONTHLY BREAST SELF-EXAMINATIONS AND GO FOR REGULAR CLINICAL BREAST EXAMINATIONS.

OCTOBER



OCTOBER 9-15 National Nutrition Week

Being underweight is one of the most common nutritional problems affecting South Africa's preschool children. Start a vegetable garden and teach children the value of eating and a living a healthy life!

OCTOBER 15-19 National Obesity Week

While lack of nutrition affects many children, equally dangerous in our society is the problem of obesity, mainly due to unhealthy food choices. Eating healthy, nutritious meals begins at home and we need to encourage children at an early age that fast food is not a healthy alternative.

OCTOBER 18-24 International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week

Lead is a metal which can be dangerous if taken into the body. Brightly col-oured 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 28-3 NOVEMBER World Stroke Week

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 show them you care and speak out against all forms of violence towards our elderly.

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!



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 normal lives.

MENTAL ILLNESS IS A SUCCESS



12

World Arthritis Day

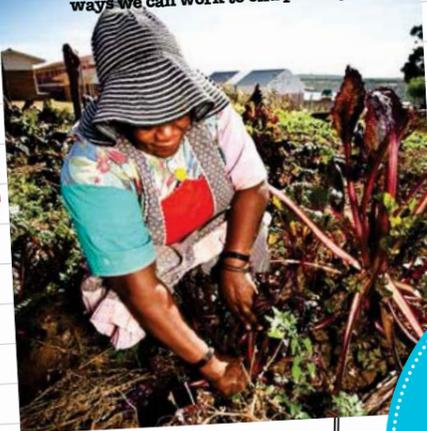
Arthritis is a disease that causes pain and loss of movement of the joints. Although there is no cure, it is a manageable condition.



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.



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.

20

World Osteoporosis Day

Osteoporosis is a disease of the bones, mainly affecting women over the age of 50 and is treatable. Ask your health worker about your choice of care.

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.

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!



16

World Spine Day

Back pain is the number one reason for time off work. Learn more about simple ways to avoid back injuries, such as correct posture when lifting heavy objects.



health

Department: Health

FIGHTING DISEASE, FIGHTING POVERTY, GIVING HOPE



FACT: 240 strokes and 130 heart attacks occur every day in South Africa - most as a result of high blood pressure, which is linked to having too much salt.

TIPS TO REDUCE YOUR SALT INTAKE

LOW SODIUM ✓ Read the labels on foodstuffs – buy low-sodium (low-salt) alternatives

✗ Eat less processed, packaged and ready-made foods – rather prepare fresh, whole foods from scratch

✗ Salt is a habit – don't add it to your food without tasting first and don't keep it on the table!

✓ Drink plenty of water to reduce bloating (water retention) caused by too much salt.

✓ Choose whole grains, vegetables and fruit instead of fast or prepared food.

REMEMBER! Soup, stock powders, sauces and flavourings have a high salt content. Use fresh or dried herbs like oregano, basil and parsley, or spices such as cumin, masala or cinnamon which add flavour without the salt.

SALT

Are you watching your salt?

South Africans eat far too much salt – **DOUBLE** what we need – which increases our risk of stroke, cancer and other diseases, without us even knowing!

Do we need salt?
Salt is an important nutrient we need to live. Since the body can't make sodium or chloride, it needs to get it from food. Salt keeps fluid levels balanced, blood pressure stable, sends information in our nerves and muscles and helps absorb nutrients in the small intestine. A little salt is good, but too much can lead to:
★ High blood pressure (hypertension)
★ Heart Attack
★ Stroke
★ Kidney stones

eclampsia. This is when protein levels in the urine are too high, which can put you and your baby at risk. Remember, too, that children need less salt than adults – eating too much puts them at risk of the same conditions as adults, like high blood pressure and kidney stones, just much earlier in their lives. In addition, too much salt in a child's diet can cause dehydration.

Signs you are eating too much salt
If you answer yes to these questions, you should eat less salt:
★ Do you eat a lot of fast foods or processed foods?
★ Are you thirsty all the time and drinking a lot?
★ Do you feel or look bloated?

REDUCE YOUR SALT INTAKE – IT WILL SHOW IN A HEALTHIER BODY, INSIDE AND OUT!

OCTOBER 23 is NATIONAL IODINE DEFICIENCY DISORDER DAY

The importance of iodine

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 in their body.

Why is it important?
Iodine is chemical used by our thyroid glands to help control our heartbeats, cholesterol, weight and hormone balance. The thyroid gland is low in the front of your neck and also helps to process food. Women naturally lack iodine because their thyroid gland is twice as big as that of men.

What foods should pregnant women avoid?
Avoid foods like cabbage, peanuts, soy flour, brussels sprouts, cauliflower and broccoli as these slow down your iodine.

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 delivering a premature baby
★ Birth abnormalities including brain damage, problems with their growth, hearing and talking.
★ Even a small lack of iodine during pregnancy can lead to low intelligence in children.

How to make sure you are getting enough iodine
A person only requires a teaspoon of iodine in a lifetime but, because iodine cannot be stored for long periods in 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

Signs that you may not be 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

DON'T EAT MORE SALT THAN USUAL – TRY TO BUY IODIZED SEA SALT INSTEAD OF REGULAR SALT

WARNING!
Iodine deficiency in pregnant women can cause brain damage to your baby!



IODINE



Why not all mushrooms are safe



By Robert McKenzie
EMS spokesperson,
KZN Department of Health

As summer approaches one of the many changes that occur in nature is the emergence of wild mushrooms. While most mushrooms found in South Africa are not poisonous, the few that are have led to many deaths over the years.

The dangers of mushrooms

Mushroom poisoning is usually due to people mistaking a poisonous mushroom for one that can be eaten. As EMS we have often treated entire families, who have eaten poisonous mushrooms that were used in a meal.

Which mushrooms ARE safe to eat?

Unfortunately, you can't learn from the taste or you might not live long enough to share your findings! For your own safety, there must be no doubt in your mind that the mushroom you're going to eat is safe to eat.

USE THIS GUIDE TO DECIDE IF A MUSHROOM IS EDIBLE:

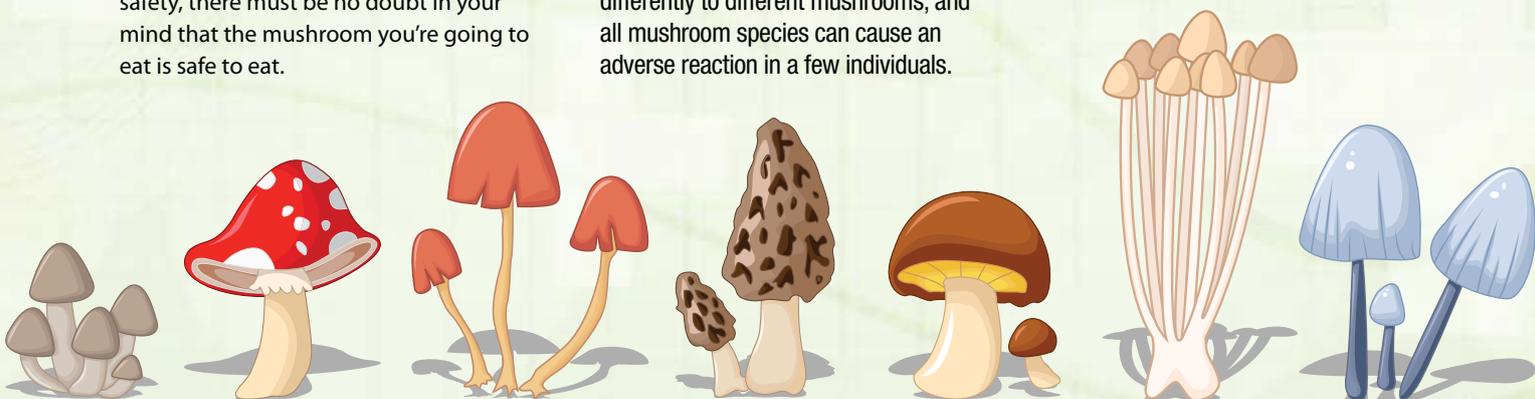
- * Only eat mushrooms that have been positively identified by yourself or a mushroom expert
- * Identify mushrooms a second time during preparation and cook them properly, unless you know that the species can be eaten raw
- * Do not mix mushroom types
- * Inform yourself about deadly mushrooms and those that are look-a likes of edible ones. "Deadly twins" differ regionally, so take into account regional variation
- * Don't pick mushrooms that are difficult to identify, unless you have expert knowledge. This applies especially to the "little brown mushrooms"
- * Eat only a small amount the first time you try a new species. People react differently to different mushrooms, and all mushroom species can cause an adverse reaction in a few individuals.

MEDICAL ADVICE

If you feel ill after eating mushrooms, seek medical help immediately. Don't wait to see if the signs and symptoms clear. Signs and symptoms may appear in a few minutes or be delayed for as long as 24 hours.

OBVIOUS SIGNS CAN INCLUDE:

- * Nausea and vomiting
- * Dizziness
- * Abdominal cramps and pains
- * Disorientations and confusion, with possible hallucinations.



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