

HEALTH MATTERS **FREE**

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EDUCATE || INFORM || EMPOWER

SEPTEMBER • 2014



ALBINISM

A GIFT FROM ABOVE

Thando Hopa
Model, Lawyer, Activist

Health features ● News ● Comic ● ..and more inside!



health

Department:
Health
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Fighting Disease, Fighting Poverty, Giving Hope



My mother wanted me to be as healthy as possible...



My mother decided not to drink any alcohol while she was pregnant

● Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause birth defects and brain damage

● Choose an alcohol-free pregnancy

● Help is available if you need it.



Call KZN Health Helpline, FREE, 24 hours, toll free: 0800 005 133

Alcoholics Anonymous: 0861 435 722



health

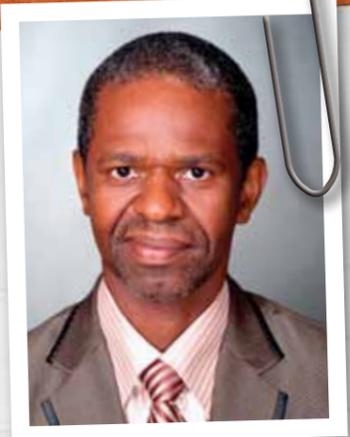
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Message from...

**KZN Health MEC,
Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo**



A **SWEMERGE** from Women's Month in August, it gives me pleasure to note the significant progress being made by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health in protecting and safeguarding the future of our women of tomorrow. This month we embark on the second round of vaccinating nearly 80,000 girls who are in grade 4 and are aged nine years and older, against the Human Papilloma virus which provides protection against cervical cancer.

DURING THE FIRST ROUND, our province managed to vaccinate up to 86% of the targeted 79,657 girls, compared to 56% of those in the Western Cape. I know that some parents have been reluctant to allow their daughters to be vaccinated, but I would like to assure parents that vaccination is safe and in the best interests of their children.

SEPTEMBER IS ALSO Albinism Awareness Month. This presents us with an opportunity to reflect and ask ourselves how we relate to those living with Albinism. As human beings, it remains our responsibility to treat people with Albinism as equals and to bury the myths and stereotypes surrounding the condition once and for all. Albinism is an inherited condition where a person is unable to produce normal pigments (colouring of the skin, hair and eyes). We all need to remember that any one of us could have been born with Albinism and nobody wants to be subjected to discriminatory treatment.

FINALLY, WE RECENTLY SADE FAREWELL to 200 students who are studying medicine in Cuba. This happened only a few days after we welcomed back the remains of the great journalist, Nat Nakasa, after it was exhumed in the United States - 50 years after he left South Africa on a scholarship. Nakasa could not return to the country of his birth because the apartheid government had only given him a one-way passport. The circumstances of Nat Nakasa's death were sad. But perhaps we can take comfort in the fact that today, unlike in the days of apartheid, we are able to send students overseas who come back armed with a wealth of skills which they can use to empower and uplift their own communities.

LET US REMEMBER all those who have made great sacrifices for our country and remember never to take our freedoms for granted!

God bless!



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KIDNEY AWARENESS

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Learning to cope and care for someone with it

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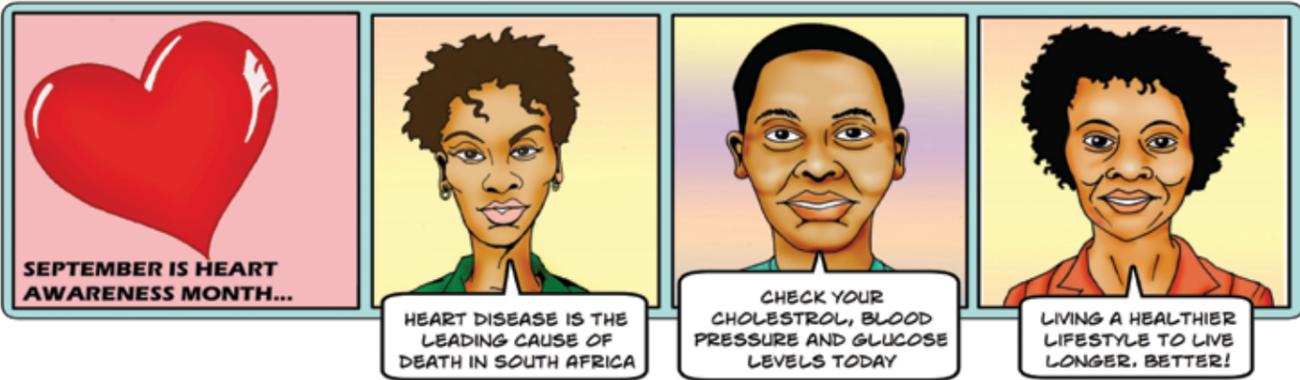
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Your suggestions and comments are welcome, and if you have been impressed by a health worker who provided an outstanding service, let us know and we will feature them!
CONTACT US on 031 562 9803, write to us on PO Box 25439, Gateway 4321 or email editor@ezempilohealthmatters.co.za

HEART DISEASE DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE!



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SEPTEMBER is...

NATIONAL HEART AWARENESS MONTH



DID YOU KNOW...

80% of all heart diseases can be prevented? That means YOU can avoid a heart attack by living a healthier lifestyle. During this month's Heart Awareness month, take a long, close look at how you live and ask yourself: "Do I eat well, exercise a few times a week and look after my heart?" With our busy lives and rushing to work and home again, our stress levels are high and our food is not what gogo used to make us eat. But it's never too late to make a change. Use this month as an opportunity to learn and educate your family and community about the importance of preventing heart disease, and you will also be saving more lives.



Teach Young Children

The earlier you start living healthily, the better your chances of living a long, healthy life. Teach children to make healthy choices about the foods they eat and explain why it's important. Children must be taught not to be tempted by the advertising they see about fast foods and about the dangers of eating the wrong types of food.

Prevent heart attack and heart disease



Do not smoke



Reduce high blood cholesterol – avoid fried, fatty foods



Reduce your stress levels, relax and sleep well!



Go for regular checkups at your local clinic



Exercise regularly – especially walking, it keeps your heart in good shape.



Don't drink a lot of alcohol (try to give it up!)



Eat at least 5 portions of fruit and veg each day – especially avocados, bananas, beetroot, garlic and onions.

IF SOMEONE IS HAVING A HEART ATTACK...

- Stay calm – overreacting will put more pressure on the person having the attack, putting them in greater danger.
- Call an ambulance or get an experienced health worker immediately to perform CPR (this is a method used to keep a person breathing)
- Make sure the person having the heart attack is sitting or lying down – get them to sit up if they are breathless, or lie flat if feeling weak.
- Medical help is important in the first few hours of a heart attack – so get help quickly.





“Learn how to love yourself because no-one will do it on your behalf”

MEET **THANDO HOPA**
Successful criminal lawyer, model and activist.

What was your childhood like?

I grew up in Lenasia South in Gauteng and had a beautiful childhood, with a big family. My life was so happy that I had no idea that outside our house lay a very sad misconception about people with albinism. But I remember walking home from school one day and this woman began screaming, throwing herself to the ground, pointing to me and shouting, “The devil’s child, what is this child doing to me, this child of the devil!” It took me a while to notice that she was talking about me. I was angry that no-one said anything, they all just looked at me and it took me years to tell my parents about it.

How did you cope as a child when you understood albinism and its effects?

I first noticed I was different in grade one when children refused to sit next to me in class. As I grew older I began understanding what it meant to have albinism and became uneasy about my appearance. I began rebelling and stopped using sunscreen and wearing sun hats even though I knew they protected my skin from the sun. Grownups would spit in their tops whenever I walked passed them. I only managed to cope because I have a wonderful family. They all played an active role in my life and continue to do so even today.

SEPTEMBER is...
ALBINISM AWARENESS MONTH

How did you overcome the social stigma?

I had made a decision to become beautiful. I chose to love, define and embrace myself. I worked around things that made me feel uncomfortable or unattractive. I used a Chinese parasol instead of a hat and when I needed to have a hat, I’d buy a brightly coloured, beautiful one that matched my outfit. I never left home without my sunscreen and if I felt my skin burn I would immediately apply sunscreen to avoid any burn or redness.

What should government do to address the stigma around albinism?

The first issue is that our vernacular languages need neutral, non-derogatory words to refer to albinism. At the moment the words that are commonly used, such as isishawa, are actually abusive and infringe on the constitutional rights of people with albinism. We’ve been preaching a legal and social message of equality for decades, yet when it comes to albinism, none of our native languages even have the vocabulary to describe people like me in a way that’s not insulting and dehumanising. I’d embrace a government campaign that would call on our linguists to create words for albinism in our own languages and ban the use of derogatory terms to describe albinism.

Government could also assist with the skincare and visual needs of the minority that have albinism. Free sun screen at government clinics, and access to visual

“Own your perfections and accept your imperfections and learn to love both equally.”

aids at every government school would go a long way to addressing the problems faced by people like me. Teachers need training about the particular needs of children with albinism, and given the tools to help such a child achieve their full educational potential. The simple acts of giving a child a visual aid so that they can see what is written on the blackboard, or photocopying test papers in a larger font, can go a long way towards preventing a child with albinism from dropping out and never fulfilling their educational potential.

What message would you like to give to young girls affected by albinism?

Learn how to love yourself because no-one will do it on your behalf. Learn how to take care of yourself in every way. Educate yourself; it will strengthen your thinking and self-confidence. Take care of your skin, use sun screen, a hat or an umbrella. Own your perfections and accept your imperfections and learn to love both equally. Lastly, do not always feel defensive about how you look. People will say and do things out of ignorance, so feel confident enough to guide people out of their ignorance and if you cannot, try your best to not be affected by it. Most of

the time people believe things out of pure misinformation, we are all guilty of that in one way or another, so try not to harbour hatred because of it.

How can parents help their children with albinism?

I would encourage them to consult with their health worker. Find out how you can assist your child in preventing skin cancer, and work around the visual impairments that limit your child’s educational performance.

My parents always told me I was beautiful, even though I sometimes didn’t believe it. It’s a parent’s responsibility to tell their child they look attractive, that they are capable of doing whatever it is they set their mind to and to support them. If it wasn’t for my parents I doubt I would have changed the negative perception I had of myself.

My parents were continuously told that I wasn’t capable of doing things: my mother was told I would never survive in a mainstream school. She rejected that and told me she knew what I was capable of and she persisted, so that I only ever went to mainstream schools and now I stand here as a lawyer, thanks to them.

“I’d embrace a government campaign that would call on our linguists to create words for albinism in our own languages and ban the use of derogatory terms to describe albinism.”



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NEWS

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KZN LEADS THE CONTINENT WITH NIGHT MEDICAL RESCUE FLIGHTS

THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN KWAZULU-NATAL has set a record by becoming the first Government Department in Africa to launch night medical flights with its specially designed helicopters.

Known as the Aero Medical System, the NVG is a custom designed pair of goggles which will provide clear visibility to aero medical crew who up until now only operated the revue helicopters during the day. The new service will allow critical health intervention to patients

in difficult to reach areas which are remotely located away from a health facility. Launching the initiative together with KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, KZN Premier, Senzo Mchunu said: "I want to express my appreciation to all the role-players who are involved in this ground-breaking medical system. I can mention the Red Cross Air Mercy Services, the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) and other important players such as health professionals across all categories."

"Don't forget to vaccinate against polio," says MEC

KZN HEALTH MEC, DR SIBONGISENI DHLOMO has called on all mothers who may have missed the routine infant polio immunisation drive to come forward. "Earlier this year South Africa experienced a country-wide shortage of the Oral Polio Vaccine. We have now replaced the stocks and the Department of Health has embarked on a catch up drive at all our hospitals, clinics and crèches," said Dhlomo.

Children needing the polio vaccine include:

- Those who have never been immunised
- Those who have missed their doses of immunisation
- Children who may have stopped their immunisations due to lost Road to Health cards/booklet.
- All other children due for their routine immunisation



HPV vaccine for all Grade 4 girls starts 29 September



KZN DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH will be rolling out its second round of HPV vaccine campaign from 29 September 2014.

The vaccine is an important preventative measure against cervical cancer which is a cancer of the womb - and a leading cause of death for many women in this province. Cervical cancer is caused by the HPV virus which affects mainly young women. The best prevention is for girls from a young age to be vaccinated against the HPV virus AND to practise safe sex when they are older. "The HPV vaccine gives good protection to young girls who are not yet exposed to sexual activity. Although some parents have failed to give consent to their children to be vaccinated, parents need to know that vaccination always remains the most cost effective measure to protect young girls against the disease that may affect them later in life. Prevention is always better than cure," says MEC Dhlomo.

REMEMBER! ALL GRADE FOUR GIRLS WHO HAVE NOT RECEIVED THE HPV VACCINE WILL BE OFFERED THE VACCINE AT SCHOOLS IN KZN BETWEEN 29 SEPTEMBER AND 31 OCTOBER 2014.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WENT BLIND?

More than 500,000 people of all ages have eye sight problems in KwaZulu-Natal with glaucoma being the number one cause of blindness. Use the following information to understand what you can do to prevent this and share the knowledge with others in your community:

What is Glaucoma?

When the fluid in your eye doesn't flow properly, it leads to a condition called glaucoma. If this pressure remains high, it can cause blindness.

PREVENTION

Regular eye checks is the best way to detect glaucoma. Children need to have their eyes checked regularly too, as the earlier eye problems are found the better the chance for treatment. The Department of Health in KZN offers regular eye screening through their health facilities and mobile eye clinics which travel across the province offering eye care services. It's important to access these services to ensure you benefit from regular eye checks.

TREATMENT

Treatment for Glaucoma includes use of eye drops or surgery. Treatment is simple and nothing to fear. Remember the most important thing is to restore your eyesight so don't delay in getting treatment – the longer you leave it, the worse it will get!

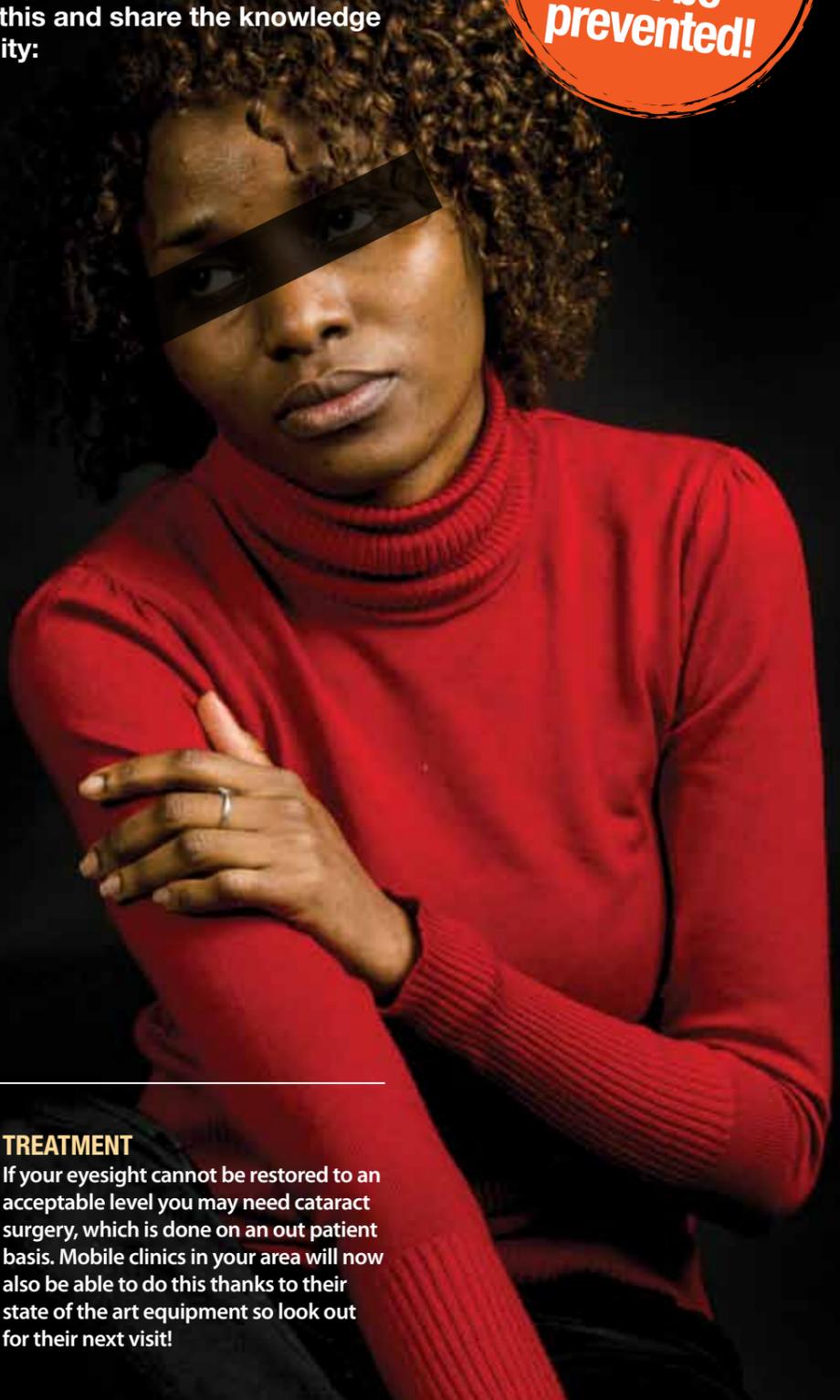
What are Cataracts?

Cataracts in the eyes occur when there is a buildup of protein in the lens of the eyes which makes it cloudy. Cataracts affect the elderly, and sometimes babies who are born with it due to infection or poor development.

TREATMENT

If your eyesight cannot be restored to an acceptable level you may need cataract surgery, which is done on an out patient basis. Mobile clinics in your area will now also be able to do this thanks to their state of the art equipment so look out for their next visit!

80% of blindness can be prevented!



Now that you understand more about glaucoma and cataracts, what about your diet and lifestyle? Apart from regular eye checks, try to do the following:



EAT HEALTHILY

Eating these foods regularly can help lead to good eye health: green, leafy vegetables such as spinach; fish, especially tuna and other oily fish; eggs, nuts, beans; oranges and other citrus fruits or juices.



QUIT SMOKING

If you've tried to quit before and started smoking again, keep trying. The more times you try to quit smoking, the more likely you are to succeed.



WEAR SUNGLASSES

The right kind of sunglasses will help protect your eyes from the sun's harmful rays. Choose sunglasses that block 99% to 100% of both UVA and UVB rays – don't buy them just for fashion!

IF YOU WORK ON A COMPUTER



Avoid glare on your computer from windows and lights and use an anti-glare screen. Choose a comfortable, supportive chair – position it so that your feet are flat on the floor. If your eyes feel dry, try to blink more. It is important to rest your eyes, so look away from the screen for 20 seconds every 20 minutes and take a break at least every 2 hours.

REMEMBER REGULAR EYE CHECKS COULD SAVE YOUR EYE SIGHT!

KZN HEALTH PREVENTS BLINDNESS IN THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN EACH MONTH

The Department's Director of Non Communicable Diseases, *Dr Jimmy Mthethwa* explains how it's done...



Training and Development

The Department has restarted the ophthalmic nurses training after 7 years. 20 qualified by March 2014 and another 20 are undergoing training.

PHC Re-engineering

As part of primary health care the Department's mobile eye vehicles visit schools for early eye care screening and treatment. These mobiles are based at the NHI Districts of uMgungundlovu and uMzinyathi. To date, 3500 children have been screened.

McCords to be centre of eye care excellence

To ensure universal access to eye care, the Department has decided to turn McCord Hospital into a specialised centre for eye care. This will allow all hospitals access to state of the art technology to ensure effective eye care treatment.

Partnership with Non-Governmental Organisations

To improve eye health services, the Department has also partnered with a number of organisations to ensure as many people as possible receive eye care services. Some of these partnerships include:

Orbis Africa

Through a specialised Eye Centre set up at Chief Inkosi Albert Luthuli Hospital, we have, in partnership with Orbis achieved the following:

- Children screened.... 1166
- Surgery performed.....557
- Doctors trained 11
- Others trained (optometrists and ophthalmic nurses).....315

The Department has also extended this partnership for the next three years to improve service delivery at Grey's and Edendale hospital.

Brien Holden Vision Institute Organisation

This organisation supports the Department with various eye health services, including the provision of glasses and low vision devices. The

organization also provides optometrists that conduct outreach services to community health centres to improve access.

African Vision Institute

Together with this organisation, we are able to extend our cataract surgeries in hard to reach areas.

Through this partnership we have conducted more than 60 cataract surgeries at Benedictine hospital and have extended ophthalmologists at some of our hospitals over the weekend.



health

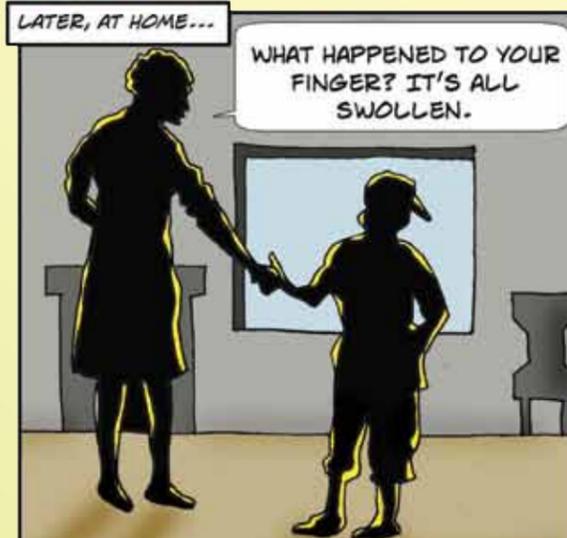
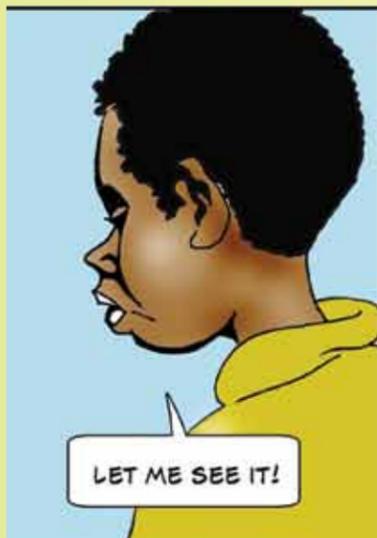
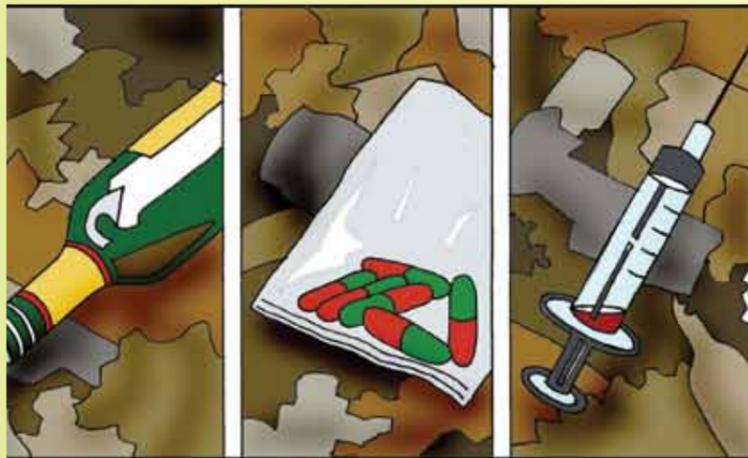
Department: Health PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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WORLD ENVIRONMENT HEALTH DAY

There is no-one to watch over these kids. Their parents are both at work.



I WAS AT THE DUMP, MAMA, AND A NEEDLE PRICKED ME.



OH NO THABO! HOW MANY TIMES HAVE I TOLD YOU NOT TO PLAY THERE? WE NEED TO GO AND HAVE YOUR FINGER CHECKED AT THE CLINIC.



AT THE CLINIC...

IT'S VERY IMPORTANT FOR US AS A COMMUNITY TO KEEP OUR AREA FREE FROM RUBBISH PILES BECAUSE OUR CHILDREN USE THESE PLACES AS PLAYING GROUNDS. WE SEE SO MANY CHILDREN EVERY MONTH GETTING VIRUSES AND INFECTIONS FROM THE DANGEROUS THINGS THEY PLAY WITH FROM THE DUMPS.



WILL MY SON BE OK?



WE'RE JUST WAITING FOR THE TEST RESULTS TO COME BACK.



Later...

I'M SORRY BUT IT'S NOT GOOD NEWS. YOUR SON HAS CONTRACTED HIV FROM THE NEEDLE HE WAS PLAYING WITH.



AND BECAUSE OF THAT, MY SON NOW HAS HIV. I AM ASKING YOU ALL TO JOIN ME AND LET'S BEGIN A CLEAN-UP OPERATION IN OUR AREA. A CLEANER COMMUNITY MEANS A SAFER PLAYING AREA FOR OUR CHILDREN.

Good health also means looking after the environment. Let's keep it clean so that our children have a safer area to play in!



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SEPTEMBER

Albinism Awareness Month

Albinism is not a curse, and this month is a reminder to show tolerance, understanding and respect for those suffering from Albinism. They are a normal part of society and should not be shunned.

Bone Marrow Donation and Leukaemia Awareness Month 15 August - 15 October

People with leukaemia, often called cancer of the blood, desperately depend on donors for bone marrow. This helps fight infection which they cannot do, as their bone marrow is affected by the cancer. There is a shortage of donors, so why not save a life this month? For information on becoming a donor, call The Sunflower Fund Toll free on 0800 12 10 82.

Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

This is a cancer affecting the lower part of a woman's womb and is usually caused by Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's). HIV positive women are also more at risk of getting cervical cancer. To prevent cervical cancer you should:

- Avoid having sex as a teenager
- Know your HIV status. The earlier cervical cancer is found, the higher the chances of a cure
- Use condoms
- Go for regular Pap smears at your local clinic.

Month of Deaf People

One of the greatest challenges is to make people understand that just because someone is deaf does not mean they are abnormal. They are normal people and can do most things any ordinary person can.

Deaf SA is an organisation fighting for the recognition of South African sign language as the 12th official language. Get to know and understand a deaf person and make a new friend, show you care!

National Oral Health Month Tooth decay is the most common health problem in children and if left untreated can lead to problems such as diabetes, heart disease and even mouth and stomach cancer. Use this month to encourage regular teeth brushing, and reduce the intake of sweets and fizzy drinks which ruin healthy teeth.

Muscular Dystrophy Awareness Month This is a condition which weakens the muscles in the body, and affects one in 1200 people in South Africa. Symptoms include muscle weakness and tiredness.



Eye Care Awareness Month

Seventy-five percent of blindness can be avoided through prevention or treatment, and that is why it is so important to get your eyes tested at least once per year. During this month encourage others in your community to have their eyes checked too. Read more in this issue.

Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

Around 800 children are diagnosed with cancer in South Africa each year and a further 500 die of this before it is even diagnosed or treated. The earlier it is detected, the better the chance of survival, so read up on the early warning signs in children so that you can access treatment early.



SEPTEMBER 26 World Environmental Health Day

This day reminds us how toxic chemicals from medical waste can end up in the environment, causing serious harm to human health. We all need to act responsibly to protect our environment because we have just one earth. It's our collective responsibility to clean up our community!



SEPTEMBER 1-8 Pharmacy Week

This week recognises the value of pharmacists in ensuring the safe and effective use of medicines, and the important role they play as professionals in the healthcare team.

SEPTEMBER 2-6

Kidney Awareness Week This week aims to raise awareness of the prevention and treatment of kidney problems, linked to hypertension, diabetes and being overweight. Read more in this issue.

Back Week Did you know back pain is the second most common reason (after the cold) for people to stay away from work? Watch your posture and avoid carrying heavy items to prevent serious injury to your back which can lead to other health problems.

SEPTEMBER

9

International Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Day

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can be deadly for an unborn child – don't take a chance. Pregnant women are encouraged to stop drinking to save the life of their baby. This day is dedicated to raising awareness on this.

SEPTEMBER

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ADHD Day

ADHD is a condition affecting the brain, most commonly in children. A person with ADHD is constantly active and may find it difficult to sit still. Many famous, successful people in the world have ADHD so it is manageable and those with the condition can live normal lives. If you feel your child is abnormally overactive, speak to your health worker about it.

SEPTEMBER

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World Alzheimer's Day

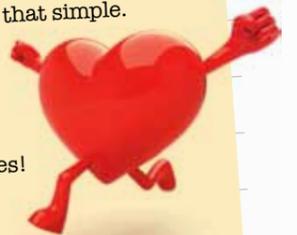
This is a disease that affects the brain's memory, mainly in older people. There is currently no cure, so we should show understanding, patience and tolerance for people with the condition.

SEPTEMBER

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World Heart Day

Did you know that at least 80% of deaths from heart disease and stroke can be avoided? You can reduce your risk by not smoking, eat a healthy diet and exercising regularly. It's that simple. So, have a heart, go for regular blood pressure, cholesterol and sugar checkups – and make healthier lifestyle choices!



SEPTEMBER

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World Rabies Day

Rabies can lead to death, that's why it's important for all dogs to be vaccinated against this disease. Report stray dogs to your nearest council office and don't let children play with them. The bite of an animal with rabies can be deadly.

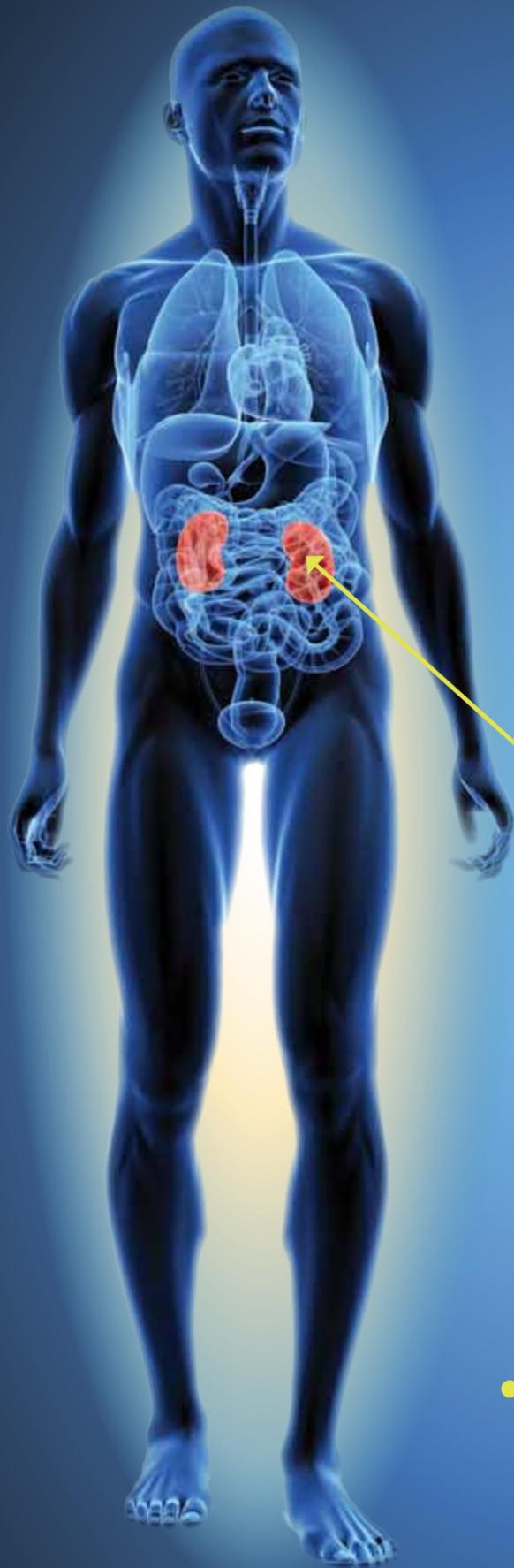


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SEPTEMBER 2-6

KIDNEY AWARENESS WEEK

10,000
South Africans die of kidney disease or failure every year!

If you suffer from hypertension and diabetes, make sure you go for regular check-ups at your clinic, as these two conditions are the biggest causes of kidney failure in South Africa today. Let's take a look at what this all means...

How do our kidneys work?

Kidneys perform the cleansing functions of all body parts except the brain. They make the essential chemicals for the body, break down unnecessary or dangerous chemicals and keep the necessary ones. Every day our kidneys clean about 150 litres of fluid from our body, including urine.

Causes of kidney problems

In SA, the biggest cause of kidney problems is hypertension followed by diabetes. For many people, kidney disease goes unnoticed and untreated because it is not something that you can actually see. Many of the symptoms, such as tiredness and depression, can be a sign of

something else. It's only when kidney disease is advanced that people notice something is wrong. Take care of your kidneys by eating healthily and keeping fit to help prevent kidney disease.

How is kidney disease treated?

The major complication of kidney disease is kidney failure. Should this happen, you will need to visit a specialised hospital regularly for dialysis. This involves being attached to a machine which will perform the function of your kidneys. There is a long waiting period for this treatment and it can be a very expensive option. Dialysis can take place up to several times a day, and is usually for life unless a kidney donor can be found.

HEALTHY KIDNEYS DEPEND ON YOU

A healthy lifestyle and diet is all that's needed to keep your kidneys in good shape. This means no smoking, reduced alcohol, eating less salt and fried meats and lots of fruits and vegetables – and of course don't forget to exercise – even a brisk walk a few times a week will help.

DON'T TAKE A CHANCE, BE PROACTIVE AND PREVENT KIDNEY DISEASE!

SEPTEMBER is...

Oral Health Month!



9 out of 10 South African children suffer from cavities (holes in the teeth)

Mouth infections are common among adults yet can be prevented

Ignoring a bleeding gum can lead to severe infections, diabetes, heart disease and stomach cancer

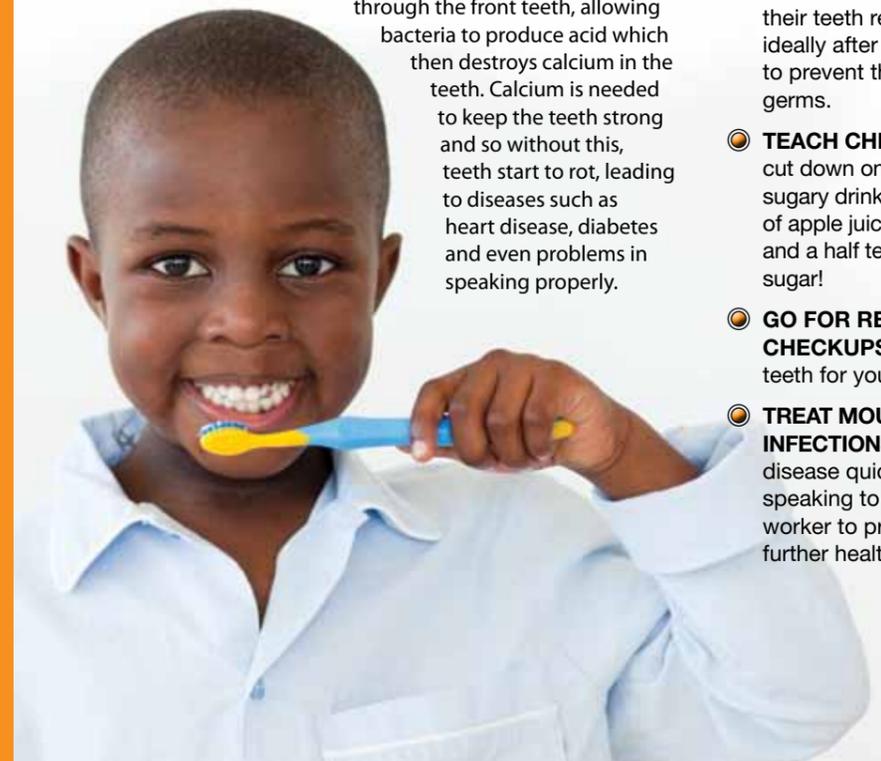
A dry mouth is common if you are taking HIV/AIDS medication as there's not enough saliva being formed to wash away bacteria in your mouth. Ask your health worker to prescribe a fluoride rinse to reduce your risk of tooth decay.

FACT
A pregnant woman with gum disease is 7 times more likely to have a premature baby!

Pregnant women experience hormonal changes which make their gums more sensitive to infection. It's important to go for regular checkups when you are pregnant and to eat foods rich in vitamins and calcium to keep your teeth healthy (eggs, meat, beans, dark green vegetables and fruits like oranges). Poor gums and teeth can affect not just your health but that of your unborn baby too.

How formula feeding affects your baby's teeth

Experts call it Baby Bottle Syndrome and it's becoming one of the most common dental problems in babies. The symptoms are the rotting of the top four baby teeth, which happens mostly because the baby falls asleep with a bottle of milk or fruit juice in their mouth. When your baby drinks, the liquid is sucked through the front teeth, allowing bacteria to produce acid which then destroys calcium in the teeth. Calcium is needed to keep the teeth strong and so without this, teeth start to rot, leading to diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and even problems in speaking properly.



To avoid this:

- **CHOOSE BREAST-FEEDING** – it's healthy and gives baby all the nutrients he needs.
- **ENCOURAGE CHILDREN** to brush their teeth regularly – ideally after every meal to prevent the buildup of germs.
- **TEACH CHILDREN** to cut down on sweets and sugary drinks – one glass of apple juice contains 6 and a half teaspoons of sugar!
- **GO FOR REGULAR CHECKUPS** on your teeth for you and baby.
- **TREAT MOUTH INFECTIONS** and gum disease quickly by speaking to your health worker to prevent further health risks.

ONLY YOU CAN PREVENT TOOTH DECAY!

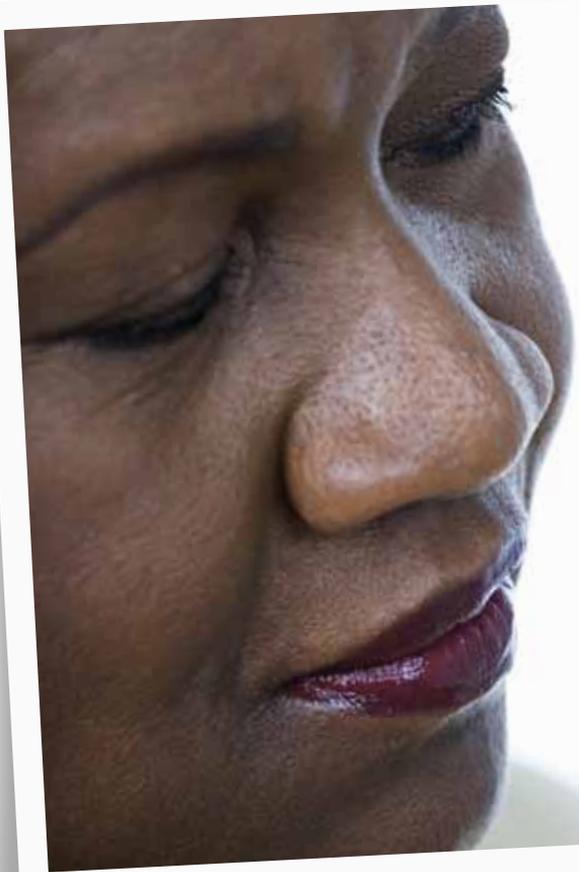


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Health
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Fighting Disease, Fighting Poverty, Giving Hope





SEPTEMBER
21

WORLD ALZHEIMER'S DAY

The three stages of Alzheimer's

STAGE 1 The first phase begins with short term memory loss, which often goes unnoticed as it is so similar to the type of forgetfulness we all experience from time to time. This memory loss then becomes worse over time, but generally the person is able to still live independently and function relatively efficiently.

STAGE 2 The confusion phase is a worsening of stage 1 – this is usually the longest phase lasting from two to ten years. The person becomes unable to make decisions, has problems speaking, is unable to coordinate his clothing and begins to show personality changes, often becoming physically or verbally aggressive.

STAGE 3 By the third stage the person becomes incapable of any kind of independent living, frequently does not recognise family, loses toilet control and eventually becomes bedridden.

QUICK FACTS ABOUT ALZHEIMER'S

- Q What is Alzheimer's disease?**
- A** Alzheimer's is a result of dementia, which is an illness that affects the brain – mainly in the elderly of 60 years and older.
- Q How does this happen?**
- A** The cause remains unknown, but what we do know is that the brain contracts a disease that makes it become smaller and smaller. This leads to those affected by dementia becoming very forgetful. They lose things and then do not know where to find them, or they get lost, forget to bath or change their clothes and they may accuse people of stealing from them or accuse their partners of being unfaithful.
- Q Can you catch this disease from other people?**
- A** No.

- Q Can the abuse of alcohol or any other drugs cause Alzheimer's?**
- A** Yes
- Q How do you know if someone has got the disease?**
- A** If the person is over 60 and starts to forget things that they always knew and maybe also do strange things, they need to be taken to a health centre for tests. The person's behaviour could be caused by another illness that can be treated and cured.
- Q Can Alzheimer's be cured?**
- A** No, but some of the symptoms can be treated. The medicine that is given can sometimes help the person to be calmer.

For more information about this disease, contact Alzheimers SA:
PINETOWN OFFICE..... 031 702 4321 PIETERMARITZBURG..... 033 396 1011



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