

HEALTH MATTERS **FREE** Ezempilo

EDUCATE || INFORM || EMPOWER EDITION 10



**Breast Cancer
Awareness Month**
Early Detection Saves Lives

**Pregnancy
and Alcohol
DON'T Mix!**



health
Department:
Health
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL



Early booking saves lives

If you think that you might be pregnant, it is very important that you go to the local clinic for a check-up, as soon as possible.

At the clinic they will check your health and find out if you have had all the necessary immunisations.

If you do not know your HIV status they will encourage you to have a test, and explain how to prevent passing HIV to your baby if you are HIV positive.

They will also talk about the safest feeding options for your baby. For most women and their babies, exclusive breastfeeding is the best choice.

Visiting the clinic regularly during pregnancy will help keep you and your baby healthy.

Message from...



Dr Victoria Mubaiwa, Program Manager: Maternal, Child & Women's Health: KZN Department of Health.

Childbirth is supposed to be a gift of life for the mother, who has endured nine months of discomfort. For many women, this time that is meant to be a celebration of life often ends in tragedy, as too many women in our province are dying during and after giving birth. This can be prevented, and we need to work together to put the message out there that attending antenatal clinics early in the pregnancy is essential to ensuring that the health of mother and baby are monitored and complications prevented.

This early booking can help save lives, especially as HIV positive pregnant women can have a better chance of giving birth to a baby who will not be born with the virus. Pregnant women must report to their antenatal clinic before 13 weeks of pregnancy, so that they can be started on the Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy (HAART) if they are HIV positive. We need to work together to encourage and support pregnant women to go for regular clinic visits; only then can we make a difference and help save lives.

As we note breast cancer awareness during this month, KZN Health would like to make women aware of other cancers facing our gender as well. We can only overcome the health challenges affecting women if we are aware of them. Cervical cancer continues to pose a huge threat to many women, and the department would like to urge all women, especially those of child bearing age, to have a pap smear done at all state health facilities. It's a simple, quick examination to detect abnormal cells that can later turn into cancer. A woman is entitled to 3 free pap smears in their lifetime, one every 10 years – or one every year if you are HIV positive. Please take this opportunity to take care of your health, it is your responsibility.

Women are the mothers of the nation, and often neglect their own health for the sake of others. We need to turn the tide. Men need to encourage and support women to go for regular health check-ups. A woman's health is the responsibility of the community, of the family and of herself. Without a healthy woman, communities often suffer, as many are left to look after themselves, often leading to neglect. We all need to take ownership of our health if we are to build healthier communities. Women especially, as primary caregivers of the family, need to ensure that they empower themselves with information on good health and how to achieve it. Prevention should be our aim, as by doing so we can avoid diseases more effectively.

We can build healthier communities; we CAN save lives, and prevent pregnant women from dying. But we can only achieve all of this if we work together – as a family, community, health worker, caregiver, government. The concept of community health care begins with each one of us, and it means caring for every person in our community. Only then can we make a real difference and save lives.

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During this week, we celebrate Infection Control Week. As a community, we need to educate not just our family and friends about the importance of infection, but our entire community as a whole, as infection is about reducing the spread of germs everywhere and wherever there is human contact.

One of the easiest ways to control the spread of infection is to wash your hands with soap and water – this can reduce the spread of germs by up to 75%!

It's important to remember the following so that there is no cross contamination, especially when caring for the sick:

Food Preparation

- Meat, chicken and fish should always be cooked. Avoid products that contain any raw or undercooked meat or dairy products. Never eat any product after its expiry date.
- Food should be stored and prepared in a clean environment, and never mix raw and cooked foods – this will spread the germs faster! Clean the area that you use to prepare food well, with a disinfectant suitable for this purpose. Cover food to protect it from flies.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with safe water and soap before and after handling food, especially raw meats, to prevent contamination. Try not to use wooden cutting blocks to cut food and don't use the same knife for cutting raw meat and cooked meat without washing the knife with warm water and soap first.
- Avoid raw seafood when caring for someone with AIDS, as this

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Infection Control Week

poses a serious threat of food poisoning to them.

- Fruits and vegetables should always be washed before being eaten, as they may contain pesticides.
- Avoid processed foods, since most of their important vitamins are destroyed during preparation.
- Ensure that rodents do not access food storage areas.

A person who has AIDS should avoid other people with infections such as flu or children's diseases as their body's immune system (ability to fight infections) is weakened due to the HIV virus, making them more vulnerable to other diseases.

People living with AIDS can get very sick from common germs and infections, but please remember that hugging, holding hands, giving massages and many other types of

touching are safe and needed by the person with AIDS.

Cover your sores

If you have any cuts or sores, especially on your hands, you must take extra care not to infect the person with AIDS or yourself. If you have cold sores, fever blisters or any other skin infection, don't touch the person or his/her things. You could pass your infection to them. If you have to give care, cover your sores with bandages and wash your hands before touching the person. If the rash or sores are on your hands, wear disposable gloves. Do not use disposable gloves more than once; throw them away and use a new pair.

REMEMBER TO WASH YOUR HANDS WITH HOT SOAPY WATER - ESPECIALLY BEFORE AND AFTER EATING, AFTER GOING TO THE TOILET, AND WHEN HANDLING PETS!



October is... Breast Cancer Awareness Month

'Early detection is the best protection against breast cancer'.



Breast cancer is a leading cause of cancer in women, affecting more than 3800 women every year. Many women still think breast cancer means death; but in reality, if it is discovered early, it can lead to effective treatment and a positive outcome.

Who is at risk of breast cancer?

- A woman whose mother, sister, or daughter has had breast cancer is at twice the risk than a woman with no family history of breast cancer.

- A woman who has already had breast cancer in one breast is at higher risk of getting it in the other.
- Older women or those who began menstruating early in life, and those who experienced menopause at a late age.
- A woman who has never given birth or has a baby after the age of 35 is at greater risk.

What are the Symptoms?

- A lump in or near the breast or in the armpit area – though most lumps are normal, have them checked if they feel unusual.
- 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 skin of the breast has the look or feel of an orange peel.

Do breast self-examination once a month during your period and at the same time of day every month.

How to examine your breasts

- Lie down and put your right arm behind your head. Lying down makes it much easier to feel all the breast tissue.
- Use the 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 firm to feel the tissue closest to your chest. It is normal to feel a firm ridge in the lower side of each breast, but you should tell your doctor if anything feels abnormal.
- 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 with your hands pressing down on your hips, look at your breasts for any changes of size, shape, contour, or dimpling, or redness or scaliness of the nipple or breast skin.

- Check each underarm while sitting up or standing, and with your arm only slightly raised so that you can easily feel in this area. Raising your arm straight up tightens the tissue in this area and makes it harder to examine.

Treatment

- For tumours that do not appear to have spread, it may be possible to remove the tumour and leave most of the breast. This is called a lumpectomy.
 - Sometimes, it might be necessary to remove the entire breast (known as a mastectomy).
 - Treatment usually involves the removal of the breast or lump followed by chemotherapy and radiation therapy.
- Cancer patients have to make several adjustments to their lifestyles.
- Treatment for breast cancer can be very unpleasant.

- Side effects of chemotherapy may make it impossible for a young woman to have a child.
- Many lose their hair temporarily.
- If the cancer has spread, it becomes important to recognise, plan for, and cope with the prospect of dying.
- Breasts are a part of the body that most women consider personal, and associate with many things she cherishes, including love and children.
- Love and understanding from family may help to make even the most difficult situation bearable.
- They need to learn how to reduce and cope with stress in their lives and change their diets. There is hope and support out there. Be strong – remember, we have come a long way in advanced treatments for cancer. It does not have to mean death.

Remember around 90% of patients survive for many years after diagnosis when breast cancer is detected early.

Contact your nearest clinic for more advice, or CANSA toll free on 0800 226622

I was only 11 years old when my mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. At any age, the thought of cancer is scary, let alone when it's your mother. My father was not in the picture at the time. He left when I was barely two, so it was always just me and my mom. Together, we could make it through anything, and this was another case of making it. I held her hand through chemo. I held the bucket when she got sick. I brushed her hair as it fell out. And a lot of hugs and kisses. From me to her and her to me. There's a lot of details I am leaving out, for most know the pain that the family and friends go through. But for us, there was a rainbow on the other side, and I thank God for holding our hands and making us strong and seeing us through it. My mother made it. I looked to her as the strongest woman in the world. As I got older, I met a lot of those strong women, and I thank God for each and every one of them because they are my inspiration. I know that I will do whatever it takes to make sure that my children don't have to go through the struggle to survive. I know too that breast cancer does not have to mean death. – A survivor's story.

October 15: International Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Day

Your baby's health is at risk if you drink alcohol while pregnant – that's the simple truth.

Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is a number of health problems that a child has because the mother drank alcohol during pregnancy. The alcohol is carried from the mother's blood to the baby – affecting the baby's development. South Africa has one of the highest incidences of FAS in the world! This is shocking, especially as it is something we can change,

because it is in our control.

Drinking alcohol while pregnant is extremely dangerous to an unborn baby because it can cause serious problems including premature labour, stillbirth and birth defects (which means your baby can be born with some kind of abnormality). Drinking alcohol while pregnant can result in your child having the following problems:

Low IQ

Developmental delays

Learning problems

Behavioural problems

Mental health problems such as depression

ADHD

Increased risk of drug abuse

SAVE YOUR BABY'S LIFE, QUIT DRINKING BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!

WAYS TO QUIT DRINKING ALCOHOL WHILE PREGNANT

Many people turn to substance abuse when they have a problem, but for pregnant women the condition is worse because it also affects the unborn child. Although it may seem difficult, quitting is possible; it can be done.

Try the following:

Admit you have a problem and can't stop drinking alcohol – admitting to having a problem is the first step to doing something about it.

Speak to your local health worker or a counsellor to help you give up alcohol and for other ways to solve your problems.

Try to solve your problems one at a time – that way, they won't seem so big that you cannot cope.

Meet with other pregnant women in your community so that you can discuss ways of dealing with your feelings and advice on overcoming a problem.

Take the first step and make a small change – it will make you feel better and encourage you to make more changes for the better.

HOW TO HELP AS A COMMUNITY

If you know someone who is drinking alcohol while pregnant, try to talk to them rather than judge them – they may feel overwhelmed and unable to cope. Arrange a network in the community so that women can help each other – it is easier to solve problems if you have support. Let each one teach one!

KZN Department of Health encourages women who are trying to fall pregnant to give up drinking alcohol completely. Remember, whatever a mother drinks during pregnancy, so does the baby – so think before you drink!

55
quality tests,
keep our
milky way at
its best.



With Calcium, Vitamin B12 and D, Our milk will help you be all that you can be. The Phosphorus inside makes it very nutritious, Plus Protein to make it more than just delicious. And let's not forget about Vitamin A, As we bring the best from Clover's milky way.

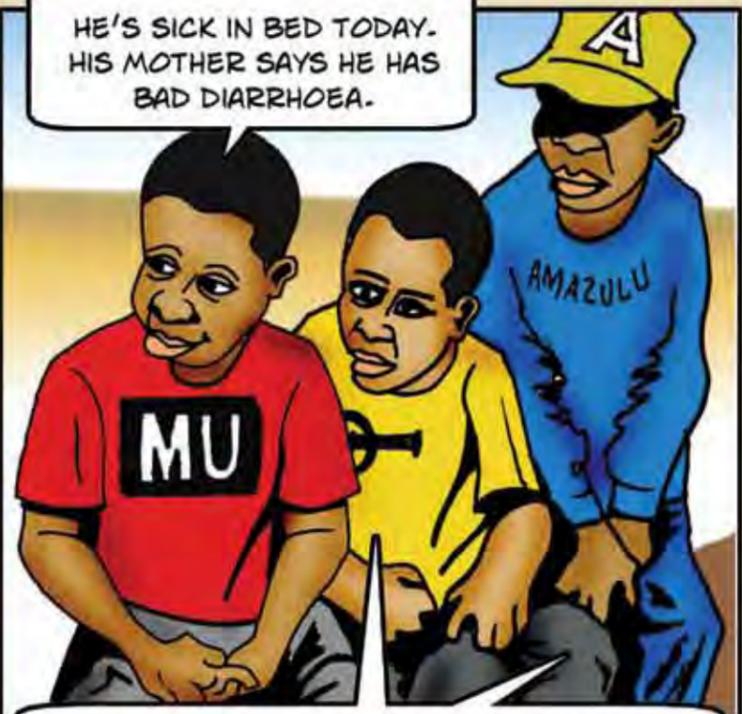


CLEAN HANDS SAVES LIVES

HEY GUYS, YOU ALL READY FOR SOCCER PRACTICE? WHY ARE YOU ALL LOOKING SO DOWN? AND WHERE IS SIPHO?



HE'S SICK IN BED TODAY. HIS MOTHER SAYS HE HAS BAD DIARRHOEA.



I THINK IT MUST BE THE MEAT WE ALL ATE YESTERDAY.



BUT I FEEL FINE, AND I ALSO ATE THE MEAT. DID YOU GUYS WASH YOUR HANDS BEFORE YOU ATE YESTERDAY?



NO.

NO.

NO.



WELL THAT IS PROBABLY WHY. DID YOU KNOW THAT HAND-WASHING REDUCES THE SPREAD OF DIARRHOEAL DISEASES BY UP TO 75%?



NOW LISTEN-UP YOU GUYS; IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO WASH YOUR HANDS BEFORE AND AFTER MEALS, AND WHEN HANDLING ANIMALS. IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO WASH YOUR HANDS AFTER GOING TO THE TOILET.



IF YOU DO NOT WASH YOUR HANDS YOU CAN SPREAD GERMS. THEN YOU WILL ALL GET SICK AND MISS THE GAME ON SATURDAY.



WHERE ARE YOU ALL GOING?

TO WASH OUR HANDS!

CLEAN HANDS SAVES LIVES!

October 12 is World Arthritis Day



Arthritis mostly affects men and women over 65 years of age. If you're not over 65, you should still be aware of the condition, so that you can help those in your community that are affected cope with it – whether it is a neighbour, friend, gogo, or someone else in the family. Arthritis, which is a swelling or 'inflammation' of the bones, is the number one disabling disease in the country, affecting one in seven people.

Take 68-year-old Grace, for example. She began suffering with severe pain in the bones in her hands, but those around her thought that it was just old age – and so did she. She would work hard all day, washing, cleaning, cooking - despite the pain, which became worse as time went by. When the pain became unbearable, she went to her local clinic and spoke to her health worker, who told her that she had arthritis. Even though there is no cure, Grace is now able to take care of her bones so that the pain is tolerable – through a healthy diet and less water-based work, as she now knows that it makes her pain worse. If we get to know something about arthritis and teach others, it will mean that someone with the condition can live a pain-free life, so let's make a difference!

Arthritis is a disease that affects our body's joints, which can result in swelling of the area. Some of the most common symptoms of arthritis are pain, regular swelling, stiffness

and in some cases, a constant ache in the joints.

The disease can also affect other organs in the body, which can lead to:

- a) Inability to use hands or walk properly
- b) Depression, tiredness and fever
- c) Weight loss
- d) Lack of sleep
- e) Muscle aches and pains
- f) Difficulty moving affected joints

While there is no cure for arthritis, there are ways to ensure that the pain is reduced. These include physical exercise and a healthy diet to avoid gaining weight, which can worsen the condition. Also, there's medication to reduce inflammation and pain – and joint replacement surgery, which is an expensive option.

Your clinic visits are important!

Keep working with your health worker, as they can assist with ways of coping and reducing the inflammation caused by arthritis.

- Talk to them about changes in your symptoms so that they can work out the right treatment for you.
- Always take your medication as prescribed.
- Report any changes in your health or any side effects that you may experience.
- Resting is crucial for arthritis sufferers, but you still need mild exercise to maintain your blood circulation!

If you know someone over 65, educate them about the symptoms of arthritis so that they know what to look for and seek treatment to relieve the pain associated with it.

23 October: National Iodine Deficiency Disorder Day

WARNING! Iodine deficiency, especially 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 that they get enough iodine in their bodies.

Why is it important?

Iodine is a chemical used by our thyroid gland that helps to control our heartbeats, cholesterol, weight, and balance our hormones. 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 large as that of men. If you are under stress, the need is even higher.

Effects on a baby

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

Risk of losing the baby or a stillbirth

Risk of delivering prematurely

The baby may be born with certain 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

Normally a person only requires a teaspoon of iodine in a lifetime, but because iodine cannot be stored in our bodies for long periods, 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,

dairy products like milk, cheese and yoghurt, onions and radishes.

What foods should pregnant women avoid?

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

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 signs 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, but try to buy iodized salt instead of normal sea salt.





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Fighting Disease, Fighting Poverty, Giving Hope

Fighting Disease, Fighting Poverty, Giving Hope



MEC DR SIBONGISENI DHLOMO HANDS OVER WHEELCHAIRS TO COMMUNITY MEMBERS

KZN Health MEC Dr Dhlomo has once again proved that he is not simply just an advocate of health matters. He recently challenged local business from the small rural town of Utrecht (now known as eMadlangeni Municipality) to contribute R20,000 for six wheelchairs that were desperately needed by the local community. They rose to the challenge, and earlier last month, Dr Dhlomo and the sponsors, Khethekile Mining, handed over the six wheelchairs

to those who needed them. “We need to equalise opportunities for persons with disabilities, assist in enhancing their quality of life, meet basic needs and ensure their inclusion and full participation in social life,” said Dhlomo, adding, “We need to inculcate the spirit of the National Health Insurance however we can, and begin to plant the seeds of the importance of universal access. We are grateful to the contribution made by Khethekile

Mining in changing the lives of these people. Now, they can move about with minimal assistance, if any.”

The recipients, all of whom live in the eMadlangeni district near Newcastle and Vryheid, were selected on the basis of their greatest need. The area is mainly rural, with a population of around 23000 people – mostly unemployed, making economic sustainability a challenge.



HOD DR SIBONGILE ZUNGU CALLS FOR GREATER EFFORTS IN PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES

According to KZN Health HOD Dr Sibongile Zungu, infectious diseases in South Africa are rising steeply and severely burden the country's economy – with treatment of these conditions being more expensive than the prevention. Addressing a Federation of Infectious Diseases Societies of Southern Africa (FIDSSA) conference last month, Dr Zungu said that more strategies needed to be put in place to address the prevention of infectious diseases, especially HIV, TB, malaria and diarrhoea. “South Africa has the fourth-largest TB-infected population in the world (behind India, China and Indonesia)

and bears 28% of the global burden of TB related to HIV. In young children, diarrhoea and pneumonia still cause 15% of deaths. The country has achieved a high level of economic stability since the transition to a constitutional democracy in 1994, and has the largest economy in Africa, contributing 40% of the continent's gross domestic product and exerting significant influence on trade and investment on the continent. However, income is much skewed, poverty remains a major challenge, and the poor have limited access to economic opportunities and health care. Even with great economic development

and social change in South Africa, we still face threats from various infectious diseases. The diseases associated with poverty are largely the communicable diseases that take a heavy toll on our population”. In her closing remarks, Dr Zungu called on those in the scientific fields dealing with infectious diseases to take a more pragmatic approach, to ensure that strategies put in place for the prevention of such diseases are communicated effectively to the health care community, the public, and policy makers.



MEC Dhlomo handing wheelchairs to community members



New clinic opening!



Parents of students studying medicine in Cuba overcome with emotion as they thank MEC Dhlomo.



MEC travels to Mid Illovo to greet students leaving for their medical studies to Cuba.



MEC bids farewell to a student travelling to study medicine in Cuba

KZN HEALTH NEWS



health

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NEWS

Fighting Disease, Fighting Poverty, Giving Hope

October 9: Reaffirming our Partnership Against HIV and AIDS **KZN Health More Determined Than Ever!**

In April 2010, the country embarked on an HIV counselling and testing (HTC) campaign to test 15 million people for HIV and other chronic diseases. In 15 months, 14 million people were counselled. More than 12 million were tested for HIV in the public sector – far more than the previous year, which means people are heeding the call to get tested. Of those tested, two million people were found to be HIV positive and were referred for further care.

Early booking vital says MEC

In his report on service delivery earlier this year, KZN health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo announced that AIDS caused 40% of mother and child deaths, saying that pregnant women still hid their pregnancies and failed to visit the antenatal clinics on time. He has again appealed to pregnant women to attend ante-natal clinics as early as possible and get tested for HIV. The earlier you do, the sooner treatment can begin if you are tested positive – treatment that would prevent the virus being passed on to your baby, giving him or her a better

chance of survival. "We can save two out of two deaths of babies if mothers and newborns receive effective and early treatment," says Dr Dhlomo.

KZN Making Progress

- The number of babies born with HIV (mother-to-child transmission) dropped from 22% in 2005 to 2.8% in 2010.
- Up to July 2011, 2 920 433 people had been tested for HIV in KwaZulu-Natal; 19% (561 057) tested positive and were referred immediately for care and treatment.
- 90% of HIV positive patients were screened for TB. HIV positive patients are provided with Isoniazid

Preventative Therapy (IPT) to prevent active TB.

- Antiretroviral therapy as at 31 March 2011:
- A total of 518 facilities (78% of KZN's facilities) provide ART, including 429 primary health care facilities initiating ARVs
- 489 801 active patients are on ART
- 2 339 staff have been updated on revised TB, HIV and AIDS guidelines
- 2 901 nurses have been trained in various courses on HIV and AIDS management



Health MEC Dr Dhlomo handing over much needed wheel chairs to two ladies in Ezeimweni.

OCTOBER: Awareness Days



1: International Day for Older Persons

This day is celebrated each year to recognise the contributions of the elderly and to look at issues that affect their lives. It's also a time to reflect on our treatment of them and how we can improve this.

1: National Inherited Disorders Day

The aim of this day is to raise awareness and promote acceptance of people born with inherited disorders (meaning that it runs in the family). We all need to help remove superstitions around these disorders so that those affected can live normal lives.

4-10: Human Trafficking Week

Human Trafficking involves recruiting, transporting, or harbouring a person through the use of force. This is illegal! Report this if you know anyone involved.

8: World Hospice and Palliative Care Week

Palliative care is special care for people with serious illnesses. The care provides relief from the symptoms, pain, and stress to improve their quality of life. Contact the Hospice Palliative Care Association on 031 2086110 if you would like to know more.

9: Partnership against AIDS anniversary

HIV/AIDS is among us, it is real and the only way to win the battle is to join hands. Every single one of us needs to come together to fight against AIDS. This day is dedicated to reaffirming that commitment. Together, we can do it.

9-13: National Nutrition Week

Being underweight is among the most common nutritional problems affecting South Africa's preschool children. One out of every 10 children aged 4 – 6 years is underweight!

10: World Mental Health Day

Each year, millions of people are diagnosed with a mental health disorder, yet few understand the problem. This day is used to educate the public on the issue and to make mental health a global priority. About half of all mental disorders begin before the age of 14, and remain a common yet treatable factor in suicides.

12: World Arthritis Day

Arthritis is a disease that causes pain and loss of movement of the joints. The exact cause is unknown and there is no cure, although lots of research is being done to find a cure.

12: National Bandana Day

On this day, people are encouraged to buy (and wear!) a bandana from Pick & Pay for R20. The money is donated to The Sunflower Fund, which assists children suffering from leukaemia and other life-threatening blood disorders.

12: International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction

This day is aimed at finding ways of reducing and preventing global disasters.

13: World Sight Day

World Sight Day is used to draw attention to blindness and the rehabilitation of the visually impaired. Older people are most affected by poor eyesight, and the message is that most eye conditions (such as cataracts) can be easily treated.

15: National Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Day

Pregnant women should not drink alcohol as it can affect an unborn baby. That's the simple truth. Use this day to encourage anyone you know to stop drinking for the sake of her baby!

15: Global Hand Washing Day

Hand washing with soap and water can prevent more than one million deaths a year from diarrhoeal diseases. It's that simple – encourage proper hand washing and save more lives!

OCTOBER: Awareness Days



16: World Food Day and International Day to End Poverty (October 17)

"FOOD PRICES – FROM CRISIS TO STABILITY" is the theme for this year's World Food Day. The aim is to make everyone not only aware of the reasons for high food prices, but to find ways to reduce this – community sharing and setting up vegetable gardens are small ways that we can all make a difference to ending poverty. It starts in our communities.

16: World Spine Day

One out of every two people suffers from back pain. This makes back pain the number one reason for days off work on sick leave, and spine experts use this day to raise awareness of this costly problem.

17 : World Trauma Day

Trauma is a major cause of death and disability across the world. This day emphasises the importance of saving and protecting a life during the most critical moments and applying measures to deal with and avoid trauma fatalities.

17-23 : Infection Control Week

Did you know that washing your hands reduces the spread of germs by 75%? This week is used to remind people of this and the importance of infection prevention. If we all did this, there would be less diseases and a

healthier society, so let's encourage everyone.

20 : National Down Syndrome Day

Down syndrome is a disorder which causes delays in physical and intellectual development in a baby. Facts about Down syndrome:

People with Down syndrome have mild to moderate mental damage

The cause is not related to age, race, religion or economic situations

80 percent of children affected by Down syndrome are born from mothers under the age of 35, although women over the age of 35 are at a higher risk of having a child with Down syndrome

There is no cure, but problems associated with the disease can be treated

Children with Down syndrome can be included in normal schools

People with Down syndrome can live up to the age of 50 to 55

20 : World Osteoporosis day

Osteoporosis is a disease of the bone that affects more than one-third of women over the age of 50 and nearly half of those over 70. It is also on the rise in men. The disease is treatable, but prevention is more effective!

23 : National Iodine Deficiency Disorder Day

Iodine is an important mineral needed for growth. Despite this, the lack of iodine in the body is the world's most prevalent, yet easily preventable cause of brain damage. Pregnant women in particular should have iodized salt, as this is the cheapest way to get the mineral. The lack of iodine can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth and other abnormalities.

24 : World Polio Day

Vaccinate your child against polio – that's the important message on this day! Polio is a highly infectious disease which targets the nervous system and can cause paralysis, affecting children - mainly those under 5. The disease has been virtually wiped out in most countries. There is no treatment for polio, but it can be prevented through vaccination.

29: World Stroke Day

Around 60 people die in South Africa every day from a stroke! This day is used to encourage people to know the signs of a stroke and as a reminder that strokes are preventable. Loss of speech, numbness of the face, losing your balance when walking – these are just some signs to look out for. Speak to your health worker for more advice. Prevention is better than cure!

The monthly guide:

Old Wives' Tales and Home Remedies



What's true and what's NOT!

When people think someone is cursed or bewitched, is it true that they will get well if their relatives harm or kill the witch?

Answer: No, this is not true! No one is ever helped by harming or killing another person!

Is it true that when the 'soft spot' on top of a baby's head is sunken the baby may die unless he gets immediate treatment?

Answer: This is mostly true, depending on the cause. The 'soft spot' sinks because the baby has lost a lot of liquid and can certainly die if his body continues to lose more liquid. If he has any of the following symptoms with a soft spot, go to your nearest clinic:

- Poor appetite
- Vomiting, diarrhoea and fever

Is it true that if there is an eclipse a pregnant woman will give birth to an abnormal baby?

Answer: This is absolutely not true!

Is it true that a woman should give birth in a dark room?

Answer: It is true that soft light is easier on the eyes of both mother and child, but there should be enough light for the midwife to see what she is doing to assist with the delivery. However, for a C-Section, the physician will need enough lighting for the safety of baby and mom.

Is it true that a newborn baby should not be given a bath until the umbilical cord falls off?

Answer: Yes, this is true. The umbilical cord should be kept dry until it falls off; as if it becomes wet it takes longer to fall off and can become infected. Sponge baths are more advisable and less risky.

When should a mother bath after giving birth?

Answer: A mother should wash with warm water the day after giving birth. Not bathing for weeks after delivery can lead to infections and should not be followed, unless she has had a C-section, in which case she might have to wait several weeks until she

heals completely – but she still needs to sponge bath!

Is it true that traditional breast feeding is better than 'modern' bottle feeding?

Answer: Definitely true! Breast milk is best, and protects your baby against infection. The yellow coloured milk that first comes out of your breasts is especially good for your baby, so breast feed – it's the best start in life you can give to your baby!

Is it true that a person with a high fever should be tightly wrapped up so that the 'air will not harm him?'

Answer: Absolutely not true! This could cause your fever to increase and is very dangerous. When a person has a high fever, it is advisable to take off all covers and clothing, as the fresh air will help bring down his fever.

Should a sick person avoid taking a bath?

Answer: No, it is a good idea to bath a sick person in warm water every day.

Through The Keyhole:

Joan Ross

Operations Manager, Fort Napier Hospital



Caring for patients with mental disorders takes a special kind of person. After all, it requires patience, compassion and bravery as no two days are the same. One of those special people is Joan Ross, Operations Manager at the Psychosocial Rehabilitation unit at Fort Napier Psychiatry Hospital in Pietermaritzburg.

The 51-year-old energy-driven mother tenderly calls her patients 'my dear' or by their name – crucial in building a trust and bond in a challenging environment that she has served for the past 24 years. After all, many health professionals would rather not work with mental disorders, while society has not yet overcome the prejudice and stigma attached to those suffering from it.

"Everything I do, I do with my heart. It must be perfect or I would rather not do it. Even my cup of tea has to be perfect. I love to be part of the process and to help my patients. I am hands-on and derive joy and

satisfaction when a patient recovers and goes home and when we receive positive reports," she says, with an outlook brimming with positivity about the future of her patients.

Joan represents a rare breed of caregivers who dedicate their time to the less fortunate in our society. Her personal and caring approach has made all the difference to her 48 patients, most of whom have committed various crimes, and are shunned by society. But Joan knows

"Everything I do, I do with my heart"

too well that they too deserve equal access to health and cannot be denied the compassionate care that goes with it.

Her mission was not an accident. Joan graduated as a nurse at Ferere hospital in East London and arrived at Fort Napier in 1987 for psychiatric training. That experience was her

calling, and she has never looked back.

"We need to encourage people and make them understand that everyone has a right to life. These patients are here because of circumstances, not by choice. My mother taught us to love and accept others and that has been a driving force in both mine and my sister's careers in nursing. You cannot be a nurse if you do not care or love others – that's the most important part of the job," says the married mother of two.

"I am a demanding person and expect more out of myself. My patients tell me that the hospital is not my home, because I want everything to be perfect every time," she adds with a laugh.

After two decades of service, Joan still feels that she has 15 more years to offer her patients and the institute. "I'm not ready to give up on my patients, I still have a lot to give to them," says Joan.