

FREE

HEALTH MATTERS Ezempilo

EDUCATE || INFORM || EMPOWER

SEPTEMBER • 2016

BLACK BRIDE.
BLACK PRIDE.
WELL GROOMED.



New AIDS treatment policy
Childhood cancer ● Eye care awareness



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Health
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

And
more
inside!

FIGHTING DISEASE, FIGHTING POVERTY, GIVING HOPE

PREGNANT? DON'T DRINK.

Don't drink alcohol while pregnant.

It's that simple.

ALCOHOL CAN CAUSE LIFELONG BRAIN DAMAGE TO YOUR CHILD.



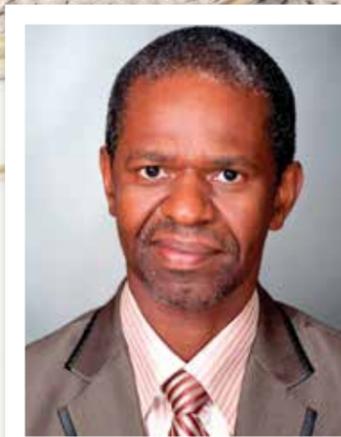
health

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FIGHTING DISEASE, FIGHTING POVERTY, GIVING HOPE

Message from...

**KZN Health MEC,
Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo**



WE ARE PLEASED THAT the new Universal Test and Treat (UTT) policy for HIV treatment is finally being implemented across the country. This means that from 01 September 2016, anyone who tests positive for HIV will immediately be initiated on treatment, without having to wait until their CD4 count drops to a certain level.

UNTIL NOW, PEOPLE WERE INITIATED on antiretroviral (ART) only once their CD4 Count had dropped to 500. Prior to that, the threshold was 350 and previously 200. The new UTT approach is in line with the World Health Organisation's guidelines that the urgent commencement of treatment for people who are HIV positive – regardless of their CD4 Count – is extremely beneficial. It was first announced by our National Minister of Health Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, during his budget speech in May this year. Indeed, this "Test and Treat" approach is an extremely significant milestone in our ongoing journey to improve access to antiretroviral treatment and curb the spread of HIV infection across the country.

OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, the government has, on the basis of research evidence, removed CD4 as an eligibility criterion for HIV+ pregnant women, children under 5 years of age, as well as HIV and TB co-infected patients. This extends this to all people living with HIV. According to the National Department of Health, the implementation of UTT will contribute to the National Development Plan goal of increasing life expectancy to at least 70 years by 2030 – people diagnosed with HIV can also live long and healthy lives once they are on ARV medication.

WE ARE AWARE THAT the implementation of "Test & Treat" will result in more HIV positive people accessing Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART) services, which may lead to congestion and increased waiting times at health facilities. In order to decrease the burden on both patients and health facilities, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health has initiated a process

of decanting stable patients. Those who do not need to see a nurse or doctor more than once a year are decentralised through the chronic medicine dispensing and distribution system, whereby patients can access their medication closer to their homes. This means that patients who don't need to see a health worker don't have to go to the clinic to collect their medication, as it will be sent to a point close to their homes.

OF THE 3.4 MILLION PEOPLE who are HIV positive countrywide, 1.1 million are in KZN. In KwaZulu-Natal we are in a good position to implement "Test and Treat" because we have scores of nurses who are trained in the Nurse-Initiated Management of Antiretroviral Treatment (NIMART), as the enormity of the task at hand is such that we cannot only rely on doctors to provide ART. NIMART-trained nurses are available throughout the province. We therefore urge the public to get tested for HIV at least once a year, so that those who test positive can be initiated on treatment immediately.

WE ALSO CALL UPON all patients who tested HIV positive in the past but did not receive treatment due to being below the previous CD4 count threshold of 500, or for other reasons, to come forward so that they can be initiated.

AS WE TEST AND TREAT, we must all make sure there are no other new infections that are coming into the pool. If we are to win the war against HIV and AIDS there needs to be behavioural change, particularly among the youth. Our message is that diseases must be prevented, because prevention is better than cure. Young people are urged to abstain from sexual activity for as long as possible – or to apply Dual Protection by using male or female condoms during every episode of sex, while combining this with medical male circumcision.

WE ALSO STRONGLY URGE parents, guardians and young people themselves to opt for medical male circumcision, which has been found to reduce the risk of female-to-male sexual transmission of HIV by approximately 60%.

God bless!

inside



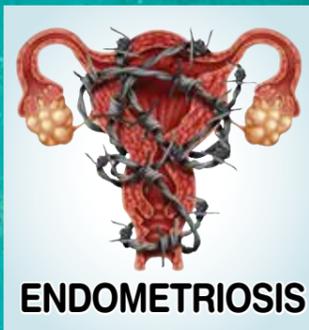
SKIN LIGHTENING



HEART AWARENESS



EYE CARE



ENDOMETRIOSIS

- ... **CHILDHOOD CANCER** What to watch out for
- ... **SKIN LIGHTENING** Do you know the dangers?
- ... **COMIC** Environmental awareness affects us all
- ... **KZN HEALTH NEWS** Latest from your Department of Health
- ... **AWARENESS DAYS** Health Days This Month
- ... **HEART AWARENESS** Myths and facts you should know
- ... **EYE CARE** Blindness is prevented, act early
- ... **ENDOMETRIOSIS** Know the facts

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

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HEART DISEASE DOES NOT DISCRIMINATE!

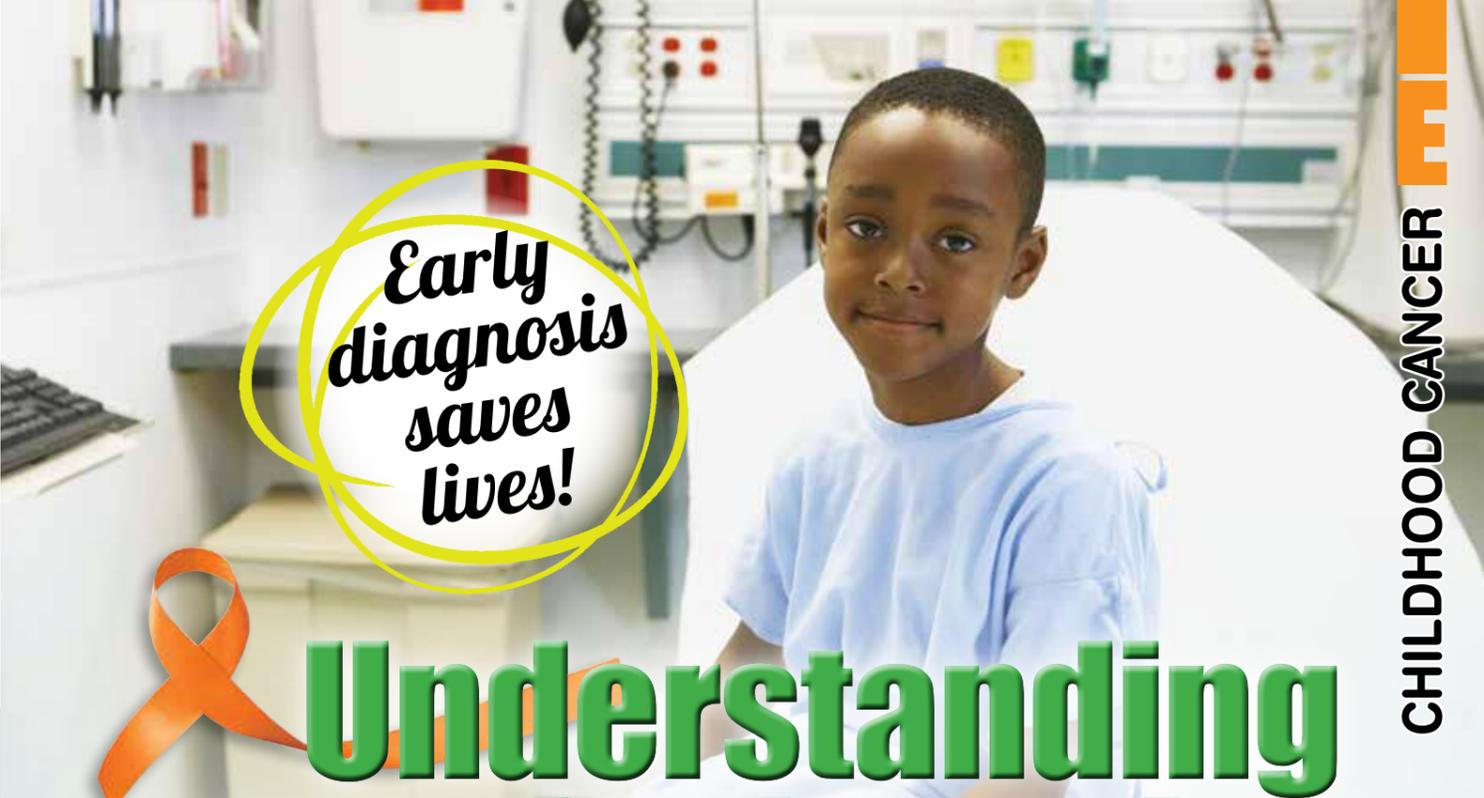
SEPTEMBER IS HEART AWARENESS MONTH...

HEART DISEASE IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH IN SOUTH AFRICA

CHECK YOUR CHOLESTROL, BLOOD PRESSURE AND GLUCOSE LEVELS TODAY

LIVING A HEALTHIER LIFESTYLE TO LIVE LONGER, BETTER!

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Early diagnosis saves lives!



Understanding leukaemia

Around 800 children are diagnosed with cancer in South Africa every year and a further 500 die of cancer before it is even recognised. **Leukaemia is among the most common cancers affecting children, so if you're a parent, learn more about this so that you know when to take your child for further checks.**

symptoms of leukaemia but remember they can also be a result of other conditions in your child, so always check with a health professional who will examine your child and let you know exactly what the cause is.

donation. But a child needing a bone marrow must find the right match for this to work. There is a huge shortage of African donors and South Africa needs at least 100,000 African donors to help children with this form of cancer.

WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR

- * Tiredness (fatigue) and pale skin
- * Infections and fever
- * Easy bleeding or bruising
- * Bone pain
- * Swelling of the stomach
- * Coughing, trouble breathing,
- * Swelling of the face and arms
- * Headache, seizures, or vomiting

TREATMENT OPTIONS

The type of treatment will depend on the age of your child, their overall health and how far the disease has spread. The most common form of treatment is chemotherapy (where medicine to kill the cancer cells are given through a drip) and in some cases, through bone marrow

How do cancers start?

Cancer begins in the cells, which are the building blocks of our body. New cells form as we need them and old cells die. Sometimes, the old cells don't die and become cancerous.

All about leukaemia

This common childhood cancer begins in the bone marrow (the part of your body where your blood cells are formed). White blood cells help your body fight infection, and in leukaemia, the bone marrow produces abnormal white blood cells making it hard for the blood to do its work. The following signs are some of the

WHO TO CONTACT

- The Cancer Association of South Africa.....0800 22 66 22
- Childhood Cancer Foundation South Africa.....086 111 2182
- The Sunflower Fund.....0800 12 10 82
- Addington Hospital.....031 327 2000
- Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital.....031 240 1000
- King Edward VIII Hospital.....031 360 3111
- Grey's Hospital.....033 897 3000

IF DIAGNOSED EARLY, 70%-85% OF CHILDREN WITH CANCER CAN BE CURED SO DON'T DELAY!



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NEW WARNING on skin lightening products

KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo has called on people to reject skin lightening products and to embrace their colour with pride.

Supporting the Anti-Skin Lightening and Bleaching campaign launched in Durban last month, MEC Dhlomo said many skin lightening products contain harsh chemicals leading to cancer and even premature death.

"Over decades we have seen people blemished and disfigured especially amongst the African and Indian groups due to the use of skin lightning products. Wrong notions were being promoted to the effect that to be Black, especially if you were particularly dark, was loaded with negative stereotypes. The implication was that natural physical traits of blackness

were defective – whiteness was now the norm for Blacks to emulate.

"Products promising miraculous transformations were marketed specifically to the Black community. Consequently many Black women and men have mutilated their bodies, and even died, because they used products containing harsh chemicals that promised peace of mind in a bottle," said Dhlomo.

MEC Dhlomo also made an impassioned plea to law enforcement authorities to act swiftly to ensure that these illegal products are taken off the shelves, destroyed and not imported again.

"Over decades we have seen people blemished and disfigured due to the use of skin lightning products."

– Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo



"...while one in three black South African women admits to using skin-lightening products, only 21% use sunscreen."

– Professor Ncoza Dlova

Leading Dermatologist backs MEC's call

Leading Durban dermatologist, Professor Ncoza Dlova has also partnered with the KZN Department of Health to raise awareness around the issue. Dlova, who conducted research into use of skin lightening creams, warned that most users were not even aware of the dangers.

"Our research was prompted by a rise in the number of patients at clinics presenting with complications from use of skin lightening creams. What we discovered was very concerning, especially as South African law requires the distributor to advise women to use a sunscreen when applying a skin lightening product. Yet, despite this requirement, none of the top 10 South African or internationally produced skin lightening products on the market warned the consumer to stop using the cream if side effects were experienced or that the product must be used with a sunscreen. And while one in every three black South African women admits to using skin-lightening products, only 21% use sunscreen," explained Dlova who also heads the country's first Women Dermatologic Society.

The skin lightening industry is seen as a lucrative market internationally, with sales running into billions of dollars, including in South

Africa. And, despite growing concern over the chemicals being used and the risk of skin cancer, Dlova says women and some men continue to use the products as a way to gain greater acceptance.

Of particular concern is the advertising drive of the products to a younger age group in an attempt to convince them to embrace lighter tone as 'more desirable.'

According to Dlova's research, most of these creams, including popular local brands, contain banned skin lightening compounds like mercury, phenol, resorcinol, steroids and hydroquinone.

"Skin lightening is not only a psycho-social burden but also a major public health issue which needs development of targeted interventions aimed at changing perceptions and educating consumers about the dangers of this practice, which is what the campaign aims to do.

The post colonisation inferiority complex and media advertisers promote being fair and thin as desirable goals and this needs to change. The Anti-Skin Lightening campaign will not only call for more action against these skin lightening products, but also more consumer awareness of the banned chemicals

being used, and will only recommend the correct use of products which are allowed on the market. In addition, we want to send out a strong message that we need to embrace our natural beauty, that Black is beautiful and that the best skin is the one you are born with," says Dlova.

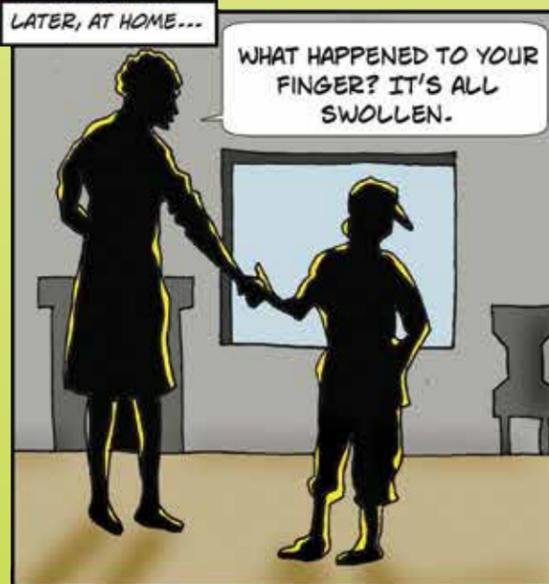
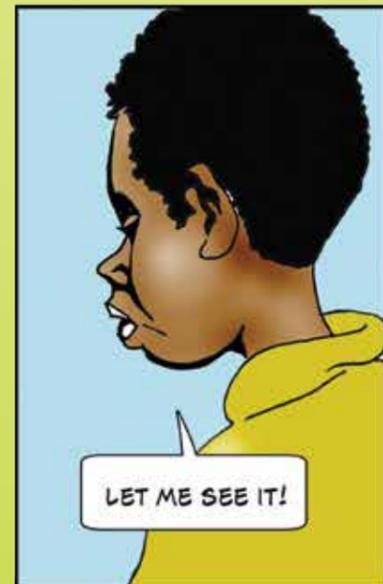
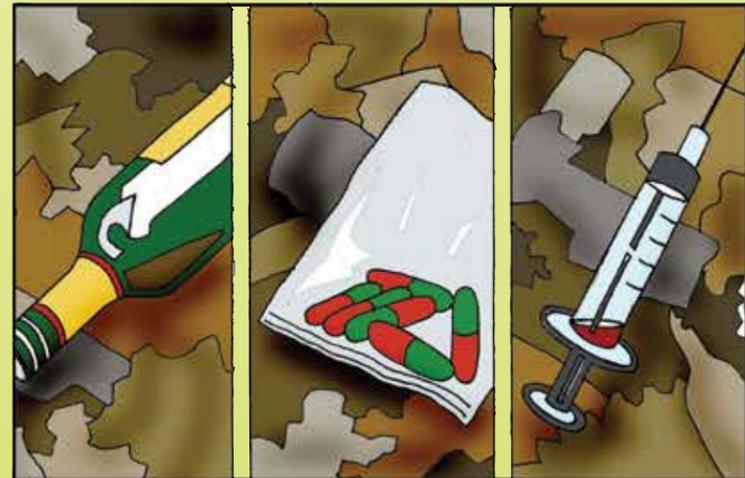


EMBRACE YOUR NATURAL BEAUTY! THE BEST SKIN IS THE ONE YOU ARE BORN WITH.



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WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH DAY



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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KZN HEALTH



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NEWS

Fighting Disease, Fighting Poverty, Giving Hope



ART NOW OFFERED TO ALL HIV PATIENTS, REGARDLESS OF CD4 COUNT

KWAZULU-NATAL HAS BEGUN ROLLING OUT the new antiretroviral treatment (ART) 'Test and Treat' policy, which came into effect this month.

Under the new policy, all HIV positive patients will be put on treatment regardless of their CD4 count - in line with World Health Organisation guidelines.

The National Department of Health says the 'Test and Treat' policy will contribute to the National Development Plan goal of increasing life expectancy to at least 70 years by 2030 – people diagnosed with HIV can also live long and healthy lives once they are on ART medication.

In welcoming the new policy, KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, says: "The National Department of Health is aware that this announcement will result in more HIV positive people accessing Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART) services, which may lead to congestion and increased waiting times at health facilities.

In order to decrease the burden on both patients and health facilities, the Department has initiated a process of decanting stable patients – those that do not need to see a nurse or doctor more than once a year – into support groups and into the chronic medicine dispensing and distribution system, through which patients can designate where their medication should be sent, closer to their homes. This means that patients who do not have to see their health worker need not come to the clinic to collect their medication, as it will be sent to a point close to their homes."

MEC Dhlomo has also praised nurses who trained in the Nurse-Initiated Management of Antiretroviral Treatment (NIMART), adding that the enormity of the task at hand is such that we cannot only rely on doctors to provide ART.

Call to patients to come forward

MEC Dhlomo also called upon all patients who tested HIV positive in the past but did not receive treatment, due to being below the previous CD4 count threshold of 500, or for other reasons, to come forward so that they can be initiated.

He urged the public to get tested for HIV at least once a year, so that people who test positive can be initiated on treatment. To those who are not yet infected, the

MEC's message was clear: keep it that way, by using condoms during every episode of sex, while combining this with medical male circumcision.

"Our message is that diseases must be prevented, because prevention is better than cure. Out of 3,4 million people who are HIV positive countrywide, 1,1 million are in KZN. What we are saying is that

there must be no new infections because we as a department have programmes and services such as free condoms to help you not get infected. To those who are infected, we are saying please do not infect others. As we test and treat, we must make sure there are no other new infections that are coming into the pool," added Dr Dhlomo.

Education first, MEC tells learners



"Abstain from drugs and alcohol because when you are drunk, you lose your mind and misbehave" – MEC Dhlomo

MEC DHLOMO REPEATED HIS CALL to learners to put their education first, during a recent visit to the Ndlangamanda High School in Nquthu in KwaZulu-Natal.

Addressing the youngsters, he warned pregnant girls about the dangers of falling pregnant and also warned boys not to impregnate girls and concentrate on their studies instead as this was the key to their future.

Learners listened attentively as the MEC encouraged them to use the Department of Health's programme for youth called 'Happy Hour' where youth receive health advice at all clinics in a youth friendly atmosphere.

"Stay away from sugar daddies and focus on your studies" was also one of the strong messages the MEC repeated during his visit.

SEPTEMBER



Albinism Awareness Month

Do you know someone who has Albinism? Have you turned away from them thinking they are cursed? The truth is, Albinism is not a curse, it is a genetic condition where people are born without the usual pigment (colour) in their bodies. Their bodies aren't able to make a normal amount of melanin, the chemical that is responsible for eye, skin, and hair colour. So most people with albinism have very pale skin, hair, and eyes. Albinism can affect people of all races, and there are different kinds of albinism. This month is a reminder to show tolerance, understanding and respect for those suffering from Albinism - they are normal people with a condition affecting their pigmentation and should not be shunned but shown acceptance in society.

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:

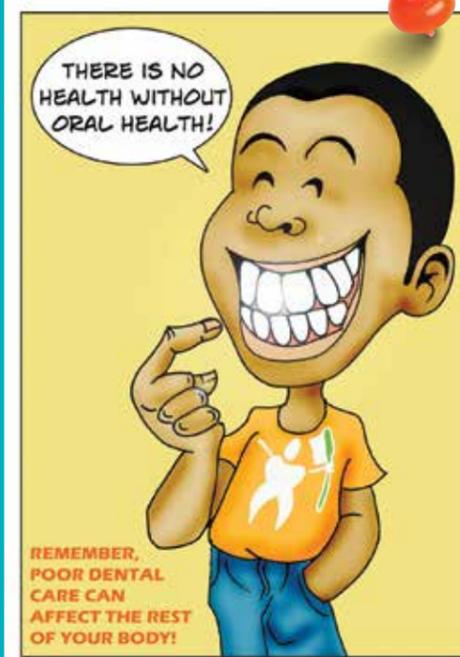
- * Avoid having sex as a teenager.
- * Know your HIV status. The earlier cervical cancer is found, the higher the chances of a cure.
- * Use condoms.
- * Go for regular Pap smears at your local clinic.

National Month of Deaf People

One of the greatest challenges is to make society understand that just because someone may be 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!

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.



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 sweet 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.

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 chance of survival so read up on the early warning signs in children in this issue so that you can access treatment early.

SEPTEMBER 2-6

Kidney Awareness Week

This week aims to raise awareness of the prevention and treatment of kidney problems which is linked to hypertension, diabetes and obesity.



SEPTEMBER 2-6

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 5-11

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.



9 International Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Day

Alcohol during pregnancy can be deadly for an unborn child, so 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.



14 ADHD Day

ADHD is a condition most common in children and affects the brain. 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.

21 World Alzheimer's Day

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

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!

28 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.

29 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, eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly. It's that simple. So, have a heart, go for regular blood pressure, cholesterol and sugar check-ups - and make healthier lifestyle choices!



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SEPTEMBER is HEART AWARENESS MONTH

MYTH BUSTING this Heart Month



Around 210 South Africans die each day from heart attacks and the numbers are increasing.

Heart disease and stroke are the second biggest killers in South Africa after HIV/AIDS," says Professor Pamela Naidoo, CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA). "Our population is becoming less active and our dietary habits are becoming increasingly unhealthy. Conditions that lead to heart disease like obesity, diabetes and hypertension are all on the rise."

She adds that the impact of heart disease is set to become worse. "But up to 80% of heart disease is preventable," says Professor Naidoo.

Knowing your risk factors empowers you

Knowing the risk factors for heart disease can inform people how they should act. The most important factors are blood pressure, blood glucose, blood cholesterol and obesity. During this month the HSFSA will be offering free tests for these risk factors at all participating Dis-Chem Pharmacies countrywide. "The tests are quick to do and are minimally invasive, yet have the potential to save lives and prevent so much pain, discomfort and financial strain," says Professor Naidoo.



BUSTING MYTHS ABOUT HEART DISEASE

There are many misconceptions and myths surrounding heart disease.

MYTH 1

People with healthy cholesterol levels will never have a heart attack

Other factors contribute to the risk profile – high blood pressure and a history of smoking increase the risk for a heart attack.

MYTH 2

All heart attacks feel the same

Heart attack doesn't always mean sharp pain and numbness in one arm. Other symptoms are difficulty breathing, sweating, a cold or clammy feeling and heart palpitations and exhaustion. Women often have different symptoms when having a heart attack.

MYTH 3

Healthy people are not at risk of heart attack

It is crucial that people are reminded of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, getting enough exercise, eating a balanced diet and not smoking. "There is still so much ignorance around the various risk factors. For instance, someone with high blood pressure could feel perfectly fine but be at great risk of a heart attack," says Gabriel Eksteen, registered dietitian and health promotion officer at the HSFSA.

High blood pressure (also known as hypertension) is often called the silent killer because there are no warning signs when levels are high, causing damage to arteries, putting the heart under strain and paving the way for a heart attack or stroke. Having your blood pressure measured is the only way to know if it's too high. Adults from the age of 20 should start having their blood pressure checked at least once a year, advises the HSFSA.



SMART LITTLE HEARTS

Many South Africans are unaware that children can also be affected by heart disease.

Although there is nothing that can be done to prevent congenital heart disease, there is a lot that can be done for new born babies, if it is detected early. Special care and treatment can prevent it being fatal and can reduce the impact of disability later in life.

CHD means a child is born with an abnormally structured heart and/or large vessels. Such hearts may have incomplete or missing parts, may be put together the wrong way, may have holes between chamber partitions or may have narrow or leaky valves or narrow vessels.

The condition is often missed or diagnosed too late. Some babies born with a heart defect can appear healthy at first and can be sent home with their families

before their heart defect is detected. Babies with undiagnosed critical CHD are discharged and then deteriorate rapidly or die. About 20% of deaths thought to be Sudden Infant Syndrome (SIDS) are actually CHD, which is why it is important to know the symptoms which can include:

- ♥ Pale gray or blue skin color (cyanosis)
- ♥ Rapid breathing
- ♥ Flared nostrils
- ♥ Grunting when breathing
- ♥ Swelling in the legs, abdomen or areas around the eyes
- ♥ Shortness of breath during feedings, leading to poor weight gain



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80%
of blindness
can be
prevented!

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.

Q 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.

Q How can it be prevented?
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 of 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 as the longer you leave it, the worse it can get!

Q What are cataracts?
Cataracts in the eyes is when there is a buildup of protein in the lens of the eyes which makes it cloudy. Cataracts affect the elderly and even 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!

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:



- 1 Eat for good vision**
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

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



- 3 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!



- 4 If you work on a computer**
- * Try to avoid glare on your computer from windows and lights.
 - * Use an anti-glare screen if needed.
 - * Choose a comfortable, supportive chair. Position it so that your feet are flat on the floor.
 - * If your eyes are dry, blink more.
 - * Every 20 minutes, rest your eyes by looking away for 20 seconds.
 - * Take a 15 minute break at least every 2 hours.



REMEMBER REGULAR EYE CHECKS CAN SAVE YOUR EYE SIGHT!

Spotlight on endometriosis

It's a dreaded hidden women's health epidemic, because it cannot be seen and has no outside physical features. More than two million women are diagnosed with this condition, which often affects their fertility. We've put together a guide to endometriosis for every woman...

More than 2 million women in SA suffer from endometriosis

Q What is endometriosis?
It's a condition where a woman's tissue which lines the womb grows outside of it, becoming trapped around the pelvic area.

Q What does it cause?
It affects menstrual period flow, immune system weaknesses, pain and discomfort.

Q What are the symptoms?

- * Chronic pelvic pain
- * Severe period pain
- * Pain during or after sexual activity
- * Fatigue
- * Painful bowel movements during periods
- * Lower back pain
- * There is a link between endometriosis and infertility, with between 30% to 50% of women with endometriosis experiencing infertility problems.

Q Is endometriosis sexually transmitted or infectious?
No. Endometriosis cannot be transferred from one human being to another. The cause of endometriosis is not yet known, but it is not an infectious disease.

Q How is it diagnosed?
An endometriosis diagnosis can be challenging, as symptoms often overlap with those of other conditions, such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and pelvic inflammatory disease. Often women do not even realise that the pain they are experiencing is caused by endometriosis. There is also no single test for endometriosis, and it can take up to a few years to be diagnosed.
A doctor or gynaecologist will usually rely on a physical examination, scans (ultrasound, magnetic resonance imaging, or MRI) and other tests. The most accurate diagnostic tool is a laparoscopy. During this procedure, a thin tube containing a camera is inserted into the abdomen (usually through the belly button) allowing the doctor to inspect the organs in the pelvis and take a tissue sample for analysis.

Q What are the treatment options?
There is no cure, but endometriosis treatment can improve pain and fertility. Treatment options include surgery and medication.

Q Can it be prevented?
There is no way to prevent endometriosis but you can reduce your chances of developing it by lowering the levels of oestrogen in your body. Long-term use of birth-control hormones, early diagnosis and surgery can prevent it from worsening. A healthy diet and elimination of foods that worsen your symptoms can also help to normalise your hormone levels and lead to lesser pain.

CONTACT YOUR HEALTH CLINIC IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE ENDOMETRIOSIS. THE SOONER YOU ARE DIAGNOSED, THE BETTER YOUR CHANCES OF SUCCESSFUL TREATMENT.