

Speech by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo on the occasion of the commemoration of the World Diabetes Day at The Civic Centre, in Northdale, UMgungundlovu District.

14 November 2014.

The First Lady Mrs Ngema-Zuma

UMgungundlovu District Mayor – Cllr Yusuf Bhamjee

KZN Health Head of Dept. – Dr Sibongile Zungu

UMgungundlovu Health District Manager – Mrs Mkhonza Zuma

Malunga omphakathi ahloniphekile

We warmly embrace this opportunity to come and warn our communities about the dangers of the silent killers that continue to unnecessarily maim and kill our people.

Today we take we utilise this platform to make it known that South Africa does not only face the challenge of HIV/ AIDS and TB infections, but it is seeing high numbers of people affected by Non Communicable Diseases such as Heart Disease and Stroke; Diabetes; Cancer and Chronic Lung Diseases.

These Diseases kill tens of millions of people worldwide every year and a large proportion of these deaths occur to people before they reach the age of 60 which is within the most productive period of life in a human being.

According to the World Health Organisation's Global Action Plan 2013-2020, Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) - mainly cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes - are the world's biggest killers. More than 36 million people die annually from NCDs (63% of global deaths), including more than 14 million people who die too young between the ages of 30 and 70.

As a country, we are also not immune in this as according to the Lancet study (2009), South African burden of NCD contributes about 1% of the global burden of diseases, which is two-three higher than that of average of developing countries.

Most of these premature deaths from NCDs are largely preventable

In this very country of ours the prevalence of NCDs is rising rapidly and is projected to cause almost three-quarters as many deaths as communicable, maternal, perinatal, and nutritional diseases by 2020, and to exceed them as the most common causes of death by 2030. That is extremely worrying and calls on all of us to act. And act quickly.

Cardiovascular system – hardening of arteries, heart diseases and stroke

How does diabetes affect the heart?

Heart diseases is the leading cause of diabetes-related deaths because the constant high blood sugar is associated with narrowing of the arteries, increased blood triglycerides (a type of fat), decreased levels of HDL ("good") cholesterol, high blood pressure and heart attack.

As one gets older, blood vessels are damaged and narrow progressively (atherosclerosis) which can lead to a heart attack or stroke. With

diabetics, this narrowing of arteries happens faster and blood clots form more easily. Additionally, when there is damage to the nervous system, the signals that should be sent to the brain to regulate heart rate and blood pressure are blocked and therefore not as effective. Symptoms of a heart attack may be vague instead of acute and these may be ignored or passed off as indigestion or stomach upset.

What is Diabetes Mellitus?

Diabetes Mellitus is an abnormally high blood glucose (sugar) level caused by the inability of the body to either produce or respond to insulin properly. Insulin is a hormone necessary to carry glucose from the bloodstream into the body cells where it is used for energy. If there is too little insulin, blood glucose levels continue to rise, as glucose is not removed from the bloodstream.

Four (4) types of diabetes

1. Type 1 diabetes

Also known as insulin dependent diabetes. It generally occurs in children (who usually have a slender build), but is usually diagnosed before the age of 40 years. These individuals do not produce enough insulin and therefore life-long treatment (injection) with insulin is necessary. Its onset is usually rapid and symptoms experienced are severe.

2. Type 2 diabetes

This type is also known as non-insulin dependent diabetes. It generally occurs in adults and is the most common form of diabetes which is often associated with obesity.

By following a healthier diet, this type of diabetes is controllable.

Symptoms are usually mild and will appear gradually. Some may not have any symptoms at all, or they may simply complain about not feeling well.

3. Gestational diabetes

This type of diabetes occurs during pregnancy and usually disappears after childbirth. It develops because of hormones released during pregnancy.

4. Hyperglycaemia is high blood glucose, caused by eating too much, feeling stressed / anxious / emotional, not taking any or sufficient insulin or medication, being ill, a break in exercise routine or hormonal imbalance.

Symptoms that may be experienced are thirst, frequent urination, tiredness and weakness, blurred vision and even coma.

The treatment for hyperglycaemia is to follow a healthy diet that provides enough food and do regular exercise.

At first mild symptoms occur, e.g. paleness, sweating, slight nausea, headache and blurred vision; thereafter symptoms such as aggression, confusion, fainting, convulsions and coma or even death. At the slightest suspicion of a "hypo", you should take some fruit, sugar or a sugared drink immediately, followed by a carbohydrate-rich meal. Always carry some food with you everywhere you go - just in case.

Risk factors for diabetes

Age; obesity; family history; physical inactivity; impaired glucose tolerance and certain ethnic and racial groups.

What are the symptoms of diabetes?

- Constant thirst
- Increased hunger
- Urinating more than usual
- Numbness/tingling in fingertips and toes
- Tiredness
- Unexplained weight loss
- Blurred vision / visual disturbance
- Skin infection due to slow healing wounds
- Constant tiredness
- Symptoms vary from individual to individual

What are the dangers that diabetes hold?

Those with uncontrolled diabetes can experience complications as the disease progresses. In the short term, in addition to the symptoms mentioned above, diabetics may be more susceptible to infection and in severe cases diabetes may fall into a coma.

Long Term Complications that can be experienced:

Eyes -cataracts and retinopathy (gradual damaging) of the eye) that may lead to blindness.

Kidneys – kidney disease and kidney failure.

Nerves – neuropathy (gradual damaging of nerves)

Feet – ulcers, infection, gangrene, etc

GENERAL ADVISES FOR PREVENTION AND MAINTAINING BLOOD SUGER LEVES

- Attain and maintain a healthy body weight.
- Eat small, regular meals, including snacks and do
- not skip any meals or snacks
- Include plenty of fibre rich carbohydrates such as
- Whole wheat products, dry beans, vegetables and fruit.
 - Give preference to unrefined carbohydrates
 - Include at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables in our diet every day.

Limit fat intake, especially saturated fats (animal fats) and remove all visible fat from meat (skin off chicken) before cooking.

Use healthier cooking methods such as steaming, baking in the oven, and microwaving, boiling, braai over the fire – instead of deep frying in oil or adding fat.

Sugar, salt and alcohol should only be used by well-controlled diabetics and then only in limited quantities.

- Drink at least 6-8 glasses of water per day.
- Do regular physical exercise for a minimum of 30 minutes at least 3 times per week. Any exercise program should be initiated with the permission of a doctor.

The ideal would be for a diabetic to go to a dietician for dietary advice.

Can diabetes be cured?

Unfortunately, there is no cure for diabetes, but with careful monitoring and commitment, diabetics can avoid complications and enjoy a long, productive life. It is especially important to control weight, blood cholesterol and blood pressure, to do regular exercise, and to avoid smoking.

Controlling blood sugar levels by a Healthy Diet, physical Exercise and Compliance to medication

We need to repeat and warn people in every platform of the factors that increase the risks of NCDs. We need to discourage the use of tobacco and the consumption of energy-dense; nutrient-poor foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt.

We need to emphasise that the low levels of physical activity at home; school or work is a recipe for disaster.

In response to the challenge posed by NCDs, Government has identified and prioritized the promotion of Healthy Lifestyles as one of the critical programmes that need robust advocating throughout the country.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health has adopted the promotion of Healthy Lifestyles as a strategy to fight non-communicable diseases.

It requires the active support of all of us to start by leading through example in terms of exercising; behaving well and eating healthily.

Ladies and gentlemen, one death from any non-communicable disease in our country is one death too many.

We all have it within ourselves to be free of Non Communicable Diseases which are correctly and appropriately termed 'disease of lifestyle'. All it

takes is for all members of the society to put in a concerted effort to change.

Diseases of Lifestyle are not only a burden to our healthcare system; they are expensive both in terms of the junk food, cigarettes and fizzy/ alcohol that we consume. They are also expensive to manage.

Truth of the matter is that every R1 spent on physical activity will save R100 on a medical bill towards non communicable diseases.