

Rheumatic Fever Week

The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA) would like to remind all South Africans that Rheumatic Fever Week takes place from 3rd-7th August 2009. Worldwide, Rheumatic Fever is the most common cause of heart disease and heart failure in patients under 30 years of age. Ironically it is also the only truly preventable chronic disease and theoretically could be wiped out in one generation by simple low cost measures.

Rheumatic Fever follows a neglected sore throat (streptococcal infection) and usually occurs in children aged 3 to 15 years. The condition is of great concern in poor and overcrowded communities as repeated infections can cause damage to the heart. This damage often results in the affected requiring expensive valve replacement surgery by their late teens or early 20s.

“This week provides the perfect opportunity for the public to educate themselves on the symptoms of Rheumatic Fever in order to prevent future heartache,” says Pamela Warrington, Communications Officer, at the HSFSA. The symptoms for Rheumatic Fever can occur between one to five weeks after a child has been infected with the streptococcus bacteria.

Symptoms include:

- Abdominal pain
- Fever
- Heart problems like chest pain or shortness of breath
- Joint pain, arthritis
- Joint swelling
- Nosebleeds
- Skin nodules
- Skin rash
- Weight loss

“The tragedy,” explains Warrington “is that if caught in time, Rheumatic Fever can be effectively treated with a simple penicillin injection and yet so many South Africans are suffering the consequences of this preventable disease.” The Heart and Stroke Foundation SA encourages all parents and caregivers to monitor their children’s health and to seek proper medical care when a child is unwell. Working together we can change the fate of many young South Africans.

For more information please call the Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA) on 021 447 4222 or go to www.heartfoundation.co.za

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FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT: Pamela Warrington, Communications Officer, The Heart and Stroke Foundation SA - +27-21-447 4222 - email: pamela@heartfoundation.co.za

The Heart and Stroke Foundation SA

The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa is a community-based organisation established to reduce the incidence of heart disease and stroke in the population of South Africa by providing education and supporting research. For further information visit www.heartfoundation.co.za