



19<sup>th</sup> August 2019

## **Heart Awareness Month 2019: *My Heart, Your Heart and the hearts of all South Africans***

*The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA) is embracing the World Heart Federation Theme My Heart Your Heart and going a mile further by extending the theme for South Africa to: My Heart Your Heart and Hearts of all South Africans.*

Our theme and sub-themes for Heart Awareness Month is also aligned to the NCDs Alliance #Enough NCDs campaign which focuses on cardiovascular and other non-communicable disease prevention, health promotion, advocacy and related public health policies.

### **Shocking facts about cardiovascular disease [CVD] (heart disease and stroke)**

CVD is the world's number one killer, claiming nearly 17, 7 million lives every year. Although the incidence of heart disease has steadily declined in high-income countries, the burden on middle and low-income countries has never been greater. In South Africa, the death rate for heart disease and stroke follows HIV and AIDS. In fact, of the 43% of all deaths in South Africa which is as a result of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), 18% is due to CVD.

In South Africa 1 in every 5 deaths are caused by CVD, totaling nearly 82 000 lives lost annually. Selected health behaviors are known to increase the risk for CVD. It is important to mitigate this risk by having better nutrition, increasing

physical activity, reducing tobacco smoking and vaping and reducing excessive alcohol consumption. If one has a genetic predisposition for heart disease or stroke one's risk profile increases exponentially if you also engage in risky health behaviors and you have co-morbid conditions such as hypertension (high blood pressure), high levels of "bad" cholesterol, diabetes, obesity and so on.

### **What does the Heart and Stroke Foundation SA have planned for Heart Awareness Month leading up to World Heart Day?**

During Heart Awareness Month (HAM) the HSFSA will be focusing on four core messages, dedicating a week to each message and reinforcing these messages during the fourth week. This year, the weekly messages are based on reducing poor health habits which increase our risk for heart disease such as tobacco smoking, lack of exercise and the use of excessive salt in our diets. There will also be a focus on hypertension, cholesterol, and sudden cardiac arrest.

Finally, we look forward to the culmination of Heart Awareness Month on World Heart Day, on 29<sup>th</sup> September, when we will invite all media to cover various WHD activities around the country, including the lighting up in red of major landmarks.

### ***Hypertension, a risk factor for heart disease***

Hypertension, also described as the "silent killer" is related to 13% of all deaths globally and is prevalent in 1 in 3 adults in South Africa. Although this is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke, 50% of individuals do not know that they are hypertensive. Excess salt intake is directly associated with raised blood pressure which may eventually lead to hypertension. Salt reduction is the simplest and most cost-effective way to help prevent circulatory health conditions. We will be highlighting 5 simple changes that help to achieve the global recommended limit of 5 grams of salt per person per day.

### ***No tobacco smoking and no electronic smoking***

*We support the proposed ban on public use of electronic smoking devices, smoking tobacco or any other form of smoking increases your risk for having a heart attack #MyHeart #YourHeart*

## ***Cholesterol, a risk factor for heart disease***

**Cholesterol** is a waxy substance found in your blood. Your body needs **cholesterol** to build healthy cells, but high levels of **cholesterol** can develop fatty deposits and increase your risk of heart disease. It is important to know the difference between LDL (bad cholesterol) and HDL (good cholesterol)  
#MyHeart #YourHeart

## ***Acute Coronary Syndrome (ACS)***

**Sudden cardiac arrest** is the abrupt loss of **heart** function, breathing and consciousness, the condition usually results from an electrical disturbance in your **heart** that disrupts its pumping action, stopping blood flow to your body. Having automatic External Defibrillator (AED) and knowing how to use it can save your life.) #MyHeart #YourHeart

## **School's Health Promotion Initiative (SHPI)**

The *Schools Health Promotions Initiative* focuses on educating primary school children on the importance of taking care of their hearts and brains from a young age by eating smart, breathing fresh air by avoiding tobacco smoke and being physically active. One of the main drivers will be to get children active. This will be highlighted by handing out free skipping ropes to the children and getting the HSFSA mascot, Hearty, to encourage them to use the skipping ropes daily.

The presentation delivered to the school children focuses on easy and effective ways to take care of your heart. Finally, the HSFSA will showcase a performance from a professional rope-skipper to captivate the learners with extraordinary tricks and skills using a mere skipping rope, thus making *moving cooler and a more aspirational* thing to do.

In addition to this, the staff at these selected schools in South Africa will have health risk assessments conducted by our health promotion officers and nursing practitioners to ensure that we have healthy school environments in all aspects.

### **Caring for adult hearts**

Less than 50% of South Africa adults living with high blood pressure (hypertension) are unaware of their condition. The prevalence of hypertension is said to be around 45% among adults. Similarly, many people who are pre-diabetic and have raised cholesterol are unaware, and as a result do not improve their lifestyles nor gain access to medication. Blood pressure should be checked at least once annually for all adults, and blood glucose annually when overweight. Many people are unaware of the dangers of hypertension, prefer to postpone getting a medical check or, simply cannot afford to get tested.

Professor Pamela Naidoo, CEO of the HSFSA, urges all South Africans to have a Health Risk Assessment (which includes checking their blood pressure, blood glucose, cholesterol levels, iron levels and weight) done for free during heart awareness month at all Dis-chem Pharmacies. Prof Naidoo expresses her gratitude to Dis-chem Pharmacies for partnering with the HSFSA to raise awareness of CVD and to mobilize communities to know their diagnosis and get treatment when necessary.

### **Heart Awareness Campaigns with key stakeholders**

Look out for exciting campaigns with some of our key stakeholders during Heart Awareness Month. Please visit our website, social pages and other media to learn more about our initiatives to prevent heart disease.

### **Making our way to *My Heart, Your Heart***

During Heart Awareness Month, the HSFSA will focus on lifestyle factors which have a major impact on one's risk for developing heart disease. The HSFSA, together with key staff at UCT's Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences will be involved in activities aligned with the World Heart Federation mission and vision to bring to South Africa's attention that we can work together to reduce the burden of heart disease. We will light up iconic landmarks on World Heart Day (WHD) as we drive the global goal of reducing premature deaths from CVD by 25% by the year 2025.

Keep an eye out for our World Heart Day activities in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, and Port Elizabeth! You are welcome to inquire about broadcasting from any one of the events we have lined up on World Heart Day!

For updates on our World Heart Day activities please on our website for regular updates [www.heartfoundation.co.za](http://www.heartfoundation.co.za) or call 021-422 1586.

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## **Ends**

*Interviews will be conducted with our CEO, Prof Pamela Naidoo, our dietitians, nutritionist, health promoters, and relevant experts. To co-ordinate and confirm interview dates you are welcome to contact the Public Relations and Communications Department on 021-422 1586 or email:*

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### **About the Heart and Stroke Foundation SA**

**The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA) plays a leading role in the fight against preventable heart disease and stroke, with the aim of seeing fewer people in South Africa suffer premature deaths and disabilities. The HSFSA, established in 1980 is a non-governmental, non-profit organization which relies on external funding to sustain the work it carries out.**

**The HSFSA aims to reduce the cardiovascular disease (CVD) burden in South Africa and ultimately on the health care system of South Africa. Our mission is to empower people in South Africa to adopt healthy lifestyles, make healthy choices easier, seek appropriate care and encourage prevention.**

**For more information visit [www.heartfoundation.co.za](http://www.heartfoundation.co.za). You can also find us on [www.facebook.com/HeartStrokeSA](https://www.facebook.com/HeartStrokeSA) and [www.twitter.com/SAHeartStroke](https://www.twitter.com/SAHeartStroke)**