



THE HEART
AND STROKE
FOUNDATION
SOUTH AFRICA

Take On The Challenge, #CommitToQuit this World No Tobacco Day

Created by the states of the World Health Organisation (WHO) in 1987, World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) is celebrated annually on 31 May to advocate for effective policy, aimed at reducing the global use of tobacco and tobacco-related products. With the COVID-19 pandemic leading many people to quit, the Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA) is aligning itself with the WHO's 2021 theme **"Commit to Quit."**

The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa's (HSFSA) Health Promotion Manager, Dana Govender, explains that "Smoking is the second leading cause of cardiovascular disease and cerebrovascular disease, after high blood pressure. Therefore, quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your heart and brain health. It's never too late to quit smoking because quitting almost immediately provides benefits and if you persevere, over time your risk of heart disease and stroke can fall almost identical to that of a non-smoker."

Globally, tobacco smoking is responsible for killing 1 in 10 adults or 1 person every 6 seconds, in addition to killing more than half of all people before the age of 60 if they smoke through their adult life. On average, smoking causes smokers to die 13 to 14 years earlier than non-smokers. Quitting tobacco use benefits health at any age. Reaching young smokers with cessation messages and aids has great benefits in terms of years of life saved. At the same time, getting adult smokers to stop helps population health almost immediately.

According to data from the American Cancer Society, 26% of the world's tobacco users will live in Africa by the year 2100. South Africa in itself is fast becoming the epicentre of tobacco growth, with 16.8% of adults (15-years+) being cigarette smokers. There are 42 100 smoking-related deaths in South Africa each year, 6 141 000 South Africans continue to use Tobacco daily, with more than 55 000 being children between the ages of 10 and 14 years.

Both smoking and passive (second-hand) smoking pose very real dangers to your health as well as those around you! Cigarettes contain more than 4000 dangerous chemicals, including nicotine which is an extremely addictive substance with numerous harmful effects and is present in all tobacco products:

- Smoking almost triples the risk of heart disease and more than doubles the risk of having a stroke.
- It narrows blood vessels, leading to raised blood pressure and expands blood clots, causing the cardiovascular equivalent of a traffic jam on the highway to your heart and brain. Reduce blood flow to the heart and you risk having a heart attack. Reduce it to the brain and you risk having a stroke.
- Smoking can lead to numerous forms of cancer, in addition to many other negative health effects such as impotence, fertility problems, oral health problems, increased risk for other infections such as TB or pneumonia and chronic lung disease.
- Babies born to mothers who smoke while pregnant are more likely to be underweight, premature or stillborn. There is also an association with the risk of miscarriage and may even harm the intellectual and behavioural development of the child. In addition, the child has a greater risk of sudden infant death syndrome, breathing problems and developing lung disease or diabetes later in his or her life.

Therefore, a top priority, adds **Professor Pamela Naidoo, CEO of the HSFA**, “is to avoid combustible and non-combustible tobacco products and the only way for individuals to eliminate tobacco-related harms is not to use them.”

Quitting tobacco use benefits health at any age. The Heart and Stroke Foundation SA encourages all South Africans to avoid smoking or the use of other tobacco products and to protect yourself and your family from exposure to second-hand smoke, or passive smoking. The benefits of quitting smoking include the following:

- 20 minutes after quitting heart rate and blood pressure drop
- 2 to 12 weeks after quitting circulation improves and lung function increases
- 12 months after quitting the risk for a heart attack is halved

How to quit?

- Consider using medical quitting aids such as nicotine patches, sprays or gums.
- Stay motivated
- Plan a substitute activity at those times you usually smoke
- Avoid other smokers and smoke-filled environments
- Find support, medical or a smoke quitting association such as the National Council Against Smoking Quit Line

We urge communities to claim their right to health and commit to making healthy life choices which includes healthy eating. Remember to always look out for the Heart Mark and DSA (Diabetes South Africa) endorsement logo on food labels as a guaranteed way to choose healthier options for you and your family. **Heart Mark and DSA** products abide by precise regulatory requirements, which assures one of a healthy food choice.

The Foundation will continue to support efforts of the international community, governments and civil society, including the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) to achieve and sustain a healthier and tobacco-free future for all.

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Interviews will be conducted with our Health Promotions Team, Dietitians and CEO, Professor Pamela Naidoo and other 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

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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. You can also find us on www.facebook.com/HeartStrokeSA, www.twitter.com/SAHeartStroke and www.instagram.com/heartstrokesa