



### **World Hypertension Day 2021 - “Measure Your Blood Pressure Accurately, Control It, Live Longer”**

The World Hypertension League (WHL), promotes World Hypertension Day (WHypD) on 17 May each year. This year’s WHypD theme is **“Measure Your Blood Pressure Accurately, Control It, Live Longer”**. The primary aim of the theme is to increase raised blood pressure (BP) awareness in populations around the world. Moreover, this year, there is an increased focus on the accurate measure of BP.

Hypertension remains the leading cause of morbidity and mortality worldwide and significantly impacts the risk of all major cardiovascular events, including strokes, sudden cardiac death, coronary heart disease, heart failure, abdominal aortic aneurysm and peripheral vascular disease and can also contribute to dementia.

**Professor Pamela Naidoo, CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA)**, highlights the following message: “Individuals over the age of 45 years should measure their blood pressure at least once every year because as one gets older there is a higher risk of raised blood pressure which may lead to cardiovascular disease (CVD). The negative health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is very clear and in particular individuals with hypertension and COVID-19 are at severe risk for hospitalization.

In South Africa, the heightened rate of high blood pressure or hypertension is a great concern as less than 50% of South African adults, living with hypertension, are unaware of their condition. Of those who are aware of their blood pressure status, half do not take any action to control their blood pressure either through lifestyle modification or medication. Hypertension is responsible for 13% of all deaths, globally. In South Africa, more than 1 in 3 adults live with high blood pressure and it is responsible for 1 in every 2 strokes and 2 in every 5 heart attacks.

Approximately 4 in adults older than 25 years have hypertension and this means 75% of the world’s hypertension population are at risk and are potential candidates for heart disease, strokes, kidney disease or even sudden death. According to a report by the World Health Organisation and Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (WHO - SAGE), almost half of the South African population is living with hypertension. Although the condition occurs less frequently in children than in adults, evidence now supports the concept that adult essential hypertension has its roots in childhood. From the USA, approximately 11% of children and adolescents have high blood pressure, whereas in South Africa the prevalence of childhood hypertension ranges from 7.5 % - 22.3%.

It is important to understand the pathophysiology of hypertension as this will prove the urgency of appropriate action to address it. Hypertension is when the force of the blood flowing through the blood vessels is persistently too high. Fluctuations in blood pressure are normal which is why it is only diagnosed when it remains high on several occasions or when it is dangerously high on one occasion.

Familial hypertension (FH) is less well-known. FH is a rare, genetic form of hypertension caused by mutations in particular genes, many of which help control the balance of fluids and salts in the body and affect blood pressure. The heritable component of blood pressure has been documented in familial and twin studies suggesting that 30%-50% of the variance of blood pressure readings are attributable to genetic heritability (explained by genes) and about 50% to environmental factors. Similarly, familial aggregation of hypertension is well recognised and a family history of hypertension has been associated with an increased risk and earlier onset of hypertension, highlighting the importance of genetic factors in hypertension.

There are various physical and lifestyle factors that can make one more likely to develop high blood pressure. Being aware of any risk factors will aid in identifying the changes needed to lower these risks, which include; Family history (having one or more close family members with high blood pressure before the age of 60 means you have two times the risk of having it. A strong family history means you have 3 or more relatives who had high blood pressure before 60 years (the likelihood of blood pressure increases with age). In fact, nearly 8 in 10 South Africans over the age of 55 years have high blood pressure - physical inactivity, an unhealthy diet (especially one that is high in salt and low in fruits and vegetables), being overweight or obese, excessive alcohol consumption, smoking and tobacco use are all various risk factors that contribute to developing high blood pressure.

Stage	Systolic BP (mmHg)		Diastolic (mmHg)	Action
Normal and Optimal	Below 130	and	Below 85	Keep up the good work and stick with heart healthy habits
High normal	130 – 139	or	85 - 89	Make lifestyle changes to lower blood pressure
Mild hypertension	140 – 159	or	90 – 99	See a doctor or GP as soon as possible
Moderate hypertension	160 – 179	or	100 – 109	See a doctor or GP as soon as possible
Hypertensive emergency	Above 180	or	Above 110	Requires emergency medical attention. Go to a hospital

Source: European Society of Cardiology

## Behaviour Change

Making small changes in behaviour can make steady improvements in blood pressure. Together, these changes can make an immense difference.

- Eat a healthy, balanced diet to maintain a healthy weight
- Reduce salt intake
- Remember to always look out for the Heart Mark and DSA on food labels as a guaranteed way to choose healthier options for you and your family
- Get physically active
- Do not smoke tobacco nor inhale the smoke from other people smoking, manage psychological stress
- Limit alcohol consumption
- Check your blood pressure at least once a year if you are over 45 years
- Take prescribed hypertension medication as specified by your doctor

As part of our ongoing efforts to curb the detrimental silent killers, we at the HSFSA pride ourselves on our flagship endorsements i.e., Heart Mark and DSA endorsed food products, encouraging healthier eating. The time is now, become a health-savvy consumer and add endorsed items to your cart. All endorsed products endure standardised rigorous testing thus ensuring a well-balanced nutritious meal every time.

We encourage people to adopt simple health-seeking behaviour changes that can help prevent hypertension and keep hypertensive patients in good health. It is important to **measure your blood pressure accurately** and know your blood pressure status and **control it** by taking your medication to **live longer** even if you are hypertensive.

**The Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa** encourages all South Africans to prevent and control this silent killer, the “modern epidemic”. Dana Govender, Hayley Cimring and their respective teams remind South Africans that the HSFSA teams visit various communities to conduct health risk assessments and therefore encourage individuals to check our website [www.heartfoundation.co.za](http://www.heartfoundation.co.za) or social media platforms. The public may also call us on 021 422 1586 for more information or join us at the following venues country-wide, where our Health Promotions team will be conducting health risk assessments, including blood pressure checks:

Date	Time	Event	Location
Monday 10 May	08:00 - 15:00	Health Risk Assessment	False Bay College Mitchell's Plain (Cape Town)
Tuesday 11 May	09:00 - 15:00	Health Talk	InterCape Bus Depot (Cape Town)
Saturday 15 May	09:00 - 14:00	Health Risk Assessment	Johannesburg Stadium (Johannesburg)
Monday 17 May	09:00	Health Talk	Blanco Clinic (George)
Monday 17 May	09:00 - 15:00	Health Risk Assessment	Cedar Square, Fourways (Johannesburg)

Monday 17 May	7:30 - 17:00	Health Risk Assessment	Windermere Centre (Durban)
Monday 17 May	9:00 - 15:00	Health Risk Assessment	Life on Kloof (Cape Town)
Tuesday 18 May	9:00 - 15:00	Health Risk Assessment	GAPA (Khayelitsha, Cape Town)
Tuesday 18 May	9:00 - 15:00	Health Talk	OR Tambo Clinic (Diepsloot)
Wednesday 19 May	9:00 - 16:00	Health Risk Assessment	Checkout Inanda Road (Durban)
Wednesday 19 May	9:00 - 15:00	Health Risk Assessment	Bryanston Shopping Centre (Johannesburg)
Friday 21 May	09:00 - 15:00	Health Risk Assessment	Malborough ground, next to the Clinic, Sandton (Johannesburg)

**END**

Interviews will be conducted with our Health Promotions Team, Dieticians 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

**Sasha Forbes**

PR, Communications & Marketing Officer

**Email:** [sasha.forbes@heartfoundation.co.za](mailto:sasha.forbes@heartfoundation.co.za)

**WhatsApp Number:** 076 775 6652

**Jodine Rhode**

PR & Communications Intern

**Email:** [jodine.rhode@heartfoundation.co.za](mailto:jodine.rhode@heartfoundation.co.za)

**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 that 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), [www.twitter.com/SAHeartStroke](https://www.twitter.com/SAHeartStroke) and [www.instagram.com/heartstrokesa](https://www.instagram.com/heartstrokesa)