

## **World Heart Day : take responsibility for your heart's health**

TO : THE MEDIA

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EMBARGO : NONE

The 26th of September marks the commemoration of the World Heart Day which seeks to inform people that heart disease and stroke are the world's leading cause of death, claiming 17.1 million lives each year; according to the World Heart Foundation.

The World Heart Federation says that at least 80% of premature deaths from heart disease and stroke could be avoided if the main risk factors, tobacco, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity, are controlled.

Younger, unmarried men are least likely to be aware of hypertension (high blood pressure) and less likely to be receiving treatment. Whereas older women, are most aware of hypertension according to data presented at the World Congress of Cardiology (WCC) Scientific Sessions held in June in Beijing, China.

"Hypertension is a well recognized major determinant of cardiovascular disease, yet, in some people awareness, treatment and control is poor," said Dr. Sibongiseni Dhlomo, MEC for Health in KwaZulu-Natal. "The result of studies has identified people that may benefit from blood pressure screening and health education to improve identification and management of their condition. It is for this reason that we have incorporated this into government outreach programmes."

On the World Heart Day, the department and non governmental organizations call on everyone to take responsibility for their own heart's health and say "I work with Heart". By taking a few simple steps and encouraging people to start by taking at least one; healthy diets, physical activity and saying no to tobacco is advocated.

The department's call to action involves, amongst others, the following steps;

- Exercise! Make exercise a regular part of your life. Each day, enjoy at least 30 minutes of physical activity that raises your heart beat. Recommended activities include brisk walking, gardening, dancing and such sports as tennis and basketball.
- Drink lots of water! At least six glasses a day.
- Eat healthily. Eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables as well as a variety of whole grains.
- Reduce your salt intake. It can help to reduce your blood pressure.
- Watch your cholesterol. Choose foods containing unsaturated fats. Avoid foods containing saturated fats and cholesterol. Eat fewer fried foods. Eat lean meat and fish.
- Stop smoking. Tobacco smoking is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Make sure your home and work spaces are smoke-free.
- Maintain a healthy weight. By avoiding obesity and overweight, you'll reduce your risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes; and
- Check up. Ask your healthcare provider to test your blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose levels. Let him or her help you get them where they need to be.

“The other worrying fact is that heart disease and stroke kills more women each year than cancer, tuberculosis, HIV and AIDS combined. An average of more than 16 women per minute die of cardiovascular disease (world wide), including heart attack and stroke. A number of initiatives have been initiated to highlight the need for a concerted effort to fight against this preventable and treatable condition. It is time that men and women take action, now, to reduce the number of deaths and disability from heart disease and stroke” concludes the MEC.

ENDS!

ISSUED BY:

CHRIS MAXON

COMMUNICATIONS

KWAZULU-NATAL: DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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