

29 September 2016
MEDIA ALERT

To : All Media
Attention : News Editors/ Health Journalists

Together, let's fight against heart disease

Overeating, lack of exercise, unhealthy diets, high blood pressure, cholesterol and high glucose levels are all factors which can trigger heart disease and threaten people's lives.

As the globe observes World Heart Day today (29 September 2016), KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Health Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo has sounded a warning call about these bad habits, emphasizing the need to protect an important organ of the body, the heart, at all times.

MEC Dhlomo is appealing to the people of KwaZulu-Natal to lead healthier lifestyles.

According to the World Heart Federation, heart disease and strokes are the world's leading cause of death, killing 17.1 million people every year. World Heart Day was set up to drive home the message that heart problems can be prevented.

The theme for 2016 World Heart Day is "Creating Healthy Environments," and is meant to encourage people to make healthy choices that are not detrimental to the heart.

"World Heart Day encourages us all to reduce our cardiovascular risk, and promotes a heart-healthy planet for those around us. World Heart Day is part of an international campaign to spread awareness about heart disease and stroke prevention. This is the perfect day to quit smoking, get exercising and start eating healthy, all in the name of keeping your heart in good working order, and improving the health and well-being of other people," says MEC Dhlomo.

"The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health encourages people to make lifestyle changes and adopt ways that are good to their hearts. This message is becoming increasingly relevant as reports of obesity, poor diet and physical inactivity in children and young people become more and more common."

The KZN Department of Health, together with other organisations and stakeholders, is actively involved in commemorating this day as part of efforts to lower the rate of premature deaths from heart diseases and its risk factors (tobacco intake, lack of physical exercise, unhealthy diet and alcohol intake).

It is believed that at least 80% of premature deaths from heart disease and stroke could be avoided if the main risk factors; which are tobacco, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity, are controlled.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health has numerous institutions that offer screening for cardiac ailments as well as treatment.

There are three spheres in terms of cardiac treatment:

- The District sphere, which deals with unstable, congestive heart failure;
- The Regional sphere, which deals with unresponsive heart failure, hypertension for investigation and hypertension on treatment with poor control; and
- The Tertiary sphere, which deals with congestive heart failure. The Department has a central hospital called Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital that helps patients who are referred from the three spheres.

MEC Dhlomo urges people to take care of their health to prevent heart disease. “Please visit your local clinic. Get a check-up at least once each year. Your doctor, nurse, or other health care professional can check for conditions that are risk factors for cardiovascular disease, such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol,” says MEC Dhlomo.

The KZN health department also urges people to:

- Eat a healthy diet that is low in sodium, saturated fat, and cholesterol and high in fresh fruits and vegetables;
- Get active by taking a brisk 10-minute walk, 3 times a day, 5 days a week;
- Do not smoke. If you do smoke, quit as soon as possible or consult health care teams for help in making a plan to quit.

ENDS

Issued by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health