



World Heart Day takes place on 29 September every year and is an opportunity for people across the globe to take part in the world's biggest intervention against cardiovascular disease (CVD).

This World Heart Day our focus is on creating heart-healthy environments by ensuring that people are able to make heart-healthy choices wherever they live, work and play. World Heart Day encourages us all to reduce our cardiovascular risk and promote a heart-healthy planet for all.

The World Heart Federation, The South African Heart and Stroke Foundation and the South African Heart Association aim to prevent and control these diseases through awareness campaigns and actions, by promoting the exchange of information, ideas and science among those involved in cardiovascular care, and advocating for disease prevention and control by promoting a healthy lifestyle at individual, community and policy maker level.

In South Africa

- Non-communicable disease (NCDs), including CVDs are estimated to account for 43% of total adult deaths in South Africa.
- CVDs account for almost a fifth (18%) of these deaths.
- 210 people die from heart disease every day.
- Every hour at least 5 South Africans have a heart attack.
- Some of the CVD related risks factors in adults in South Africa are outlined below:
 - 18% of the population smoke tobacco.
 - 11 litres of pure alcohol is consumed per person.
 - 10% of individuals, 15 years and older, are pre-hypertensive.
 - 1 in 3 South African adults (33.7%) have hypertension which can increase the risk of heart attack, heart failure, kidney disease or stroke.
 - Hypertension is worsened by poor eating habits, obesity, lack of physical activity and excessive alcohol intake.
 - Obesity due to nutrient-poor food and high sugar beverages is common.
 - Cardiac Disease in Maternity is an important contributor to maternal death beyond the standard date of reporting (42 days).

Obesity in South Africa

- SA has the highest rate of obesity in sub-Saharan Africa.
- 70% of women and a third of men in South Africa are classified as overweight or obese.
- 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 5 boys between the ages 2-14 years are overweight or obese.

Taking action:

- In February 2016, South Africa became the first African country to announce plans to introduce a new tax on sugar-sweetened drinks. This "sugar tax" will come into force from April 2017. This is based on data that one in five South Africans consume an excessive amount of sugar.
- In 2013, the South African Government introduced legislation in line with targets set to reduce salt intake to less than 5g a day per person by 2020.

Children get heart disease too:

- Congenital heart disease is the most common birth defect, affecting 8 in 1000 children.
- Rheumatic Heart Disease is the most common acquired heart disease and can affect up to 2% of schoolchildren living in vulnerable situations. It is caused by an untreated sore throat.
- Although both of these can be treated by early diagnosis and timely surgery, this is not available in every part of country and very few children are able to access life-saving surgery in Africa.

Preventing CVD and promoting overall health and well-being

- Public health messaging:
 - Focus on knowing "your numbers"- screen for HDL, LDL cholesterol and hypertension.
 - Live a healthy life-style: eat healthy and make smart food choices (reduce salt and sugar intake and increase fruit and vegetable consumption), engage in physical activity (30 minutes a day for 5 days a week), avoid smoking, reduce stress and emotional distress.
 - Awareness and knowledge of genetic pre-disposition (familial factors) and life stage (middle and older adult years) as risk factors for CVD onset.
 - Once diagnosed with CVD, stay on treatment, talk to the doctor, nurse and allied health practitioner.
 - Empower individuals, families and communities to pursue one goal - improve overall health and prevent CVD onset.
 - Shortness of breath in pregnancy or postpartum can be a sign of a heart problem and needs to be checked up.



Prof Karen Sliwa, MD, PhD, FESC,
Director: Hatter Institute for
Cardiovascular Research in Africa
Faculty of Health Sciences
Telephone : +27 21 021 406 6457
Email: karen.sliwa-hahnle@uct.ac.za
Web: www.hatter.uct.ac.za
World heart Federation President Elect
(2017-2019)
Immediate Past President Saheart
(2016-2017)



**Prof Pamela Naidoo, MA, MPH,
DPhil**
CEO: Heart and Stroke Foundation
South Africa
Extraordinary Professor: University of
the Western Cape
Professor Extraordinaire: Stellenbosch
University
Tel: +27 21 4221586
Email: pamela@heartfoundation.co.za
Web: www.heartfoundation.co.za



**Dr Liesl Zühlke, MB CHB DCH
FCPaeds Cert Card MPH FESC
PhD**
Department of Paediatrics & Child
Health
Director: Children's Heart Disease
Research Unit
Faculty of Health Sciences
University of Cape Town
Telephone: +27 (0)21 6502373
Email: liesl.zuhlke@uct.ac.za
Immediate Past-President
Paediatric Cardiac Society of South
Africa (2012-2016)
President South African Heart
Association (2016-2016)

