

#WorldHeartDay Put your heart first

Every day 225 South Africans are killed by heart disease despite the fact that 80% of heart disease and stroke can be prevented says the Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa (HSFSA).



Source: supplied by agency

To create awareness around heart disease and stroke, today is World Heart Day, an culmination of a month of heart awareness by HSFSA.

According to the HSFSA 13% of deaths are caused by high blood pressure. A recent survey, conducted by Jungle, shows while high blood pressure is the most common issue affecting South Africans - with nearly 40% of participants or a member of their family suffering from high blood pressure - 60% of survey participants did not know their blood pressure reading.

Unhealthy lifestyles

The survey found the only half of the respondents exercise regularly, and even fewer take steps to ensure good heart health. It also found that lifestyles are becoming unhealthier with one out of five South Africans skipping breakfast.

"Poor nutrition and unhealthy eating habits are some of the core risk factors for heart disease and strokes," says Professor Pamela Naidoo, CEO of the HSFSA.

"Finding a balance between good nutrition and other healthy habits can do wonders for one's heart, which, in turn, can help individuals live longer lives," says Kershnee Kallee, marketing manager at Jungle.

She says the survey shows that over 50% of people stated that their choices of nutritional food depended mostly on convenience. "The most common snack items were crisps," she adds.

"Almost 70% said they did not take a multivitamin or supplement, and 49% have never had their heart checked," she says.

Take care of your heart

1. Get into a regular exercise routine

Even light exercise is crucial to maintaining a healthy heart. So, walk the dog, take a stroll with friends – it all counts

2. Keep a list of heart-friendly food choices close by

Having a list like this nearby when it's time for your monthly or weekly shop will always prove beneficial. If you're not 100% sure of which foods to go for, look out for the Heart Mark (meaning it's certified heart-healthy food by the HSFSA) on the packaging. Stocking heart-healthy foods is a step in the right direction for creating a healthier lifestyle for you and your family. Being healthy does not have to be time-consuming.

3. Go for regular checkups

Knowing your blood pressure and being clued up on your cardiovascular health is vital. Check in with your GP to ensure your heart is in tip-top shape.

"A combination of the right food and some simple lifestyle changes is just what every South African needs to help reduce the risk of heart-related problems," says Kallee.

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