



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



MEDIA STATEMENT

To: Editors & Health Journalists
Issued by: Department of Health
Date: Wednesday, 17 May 2023

World Hypertension Day Commemoration - 17 May

Pretoria: The Department of Health urges South Africans to go for regular health screening which including for hypertension or high blood pressure, otherwise referred to as the “silent killer” because in most cases people may show no symptoms.

The Department, supported by its stakeholders in the sector join hands to commemorate World Hypertension Day (17 May) and Salt Awareness Week (15-21 May) to raise awareness about the causes and risks associated with high blood pressure and the harmful practice of excessive salt consumption.

The 2023 World Hypertension Day is commemorated under the theme: “**Measure Your Blood Pressure Accurately, Control It, Live Longer**”, whereas the Salt Awareness Week is commemorated under “**Ditch the salt for the sake of our heart**”.

Hypertension is one of the most serious risk factors for death and is responsible for almost 13% of all deaths globally. In South Africa, almost 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.

Hypertension mainly affects adults, however increased rates of obesity and related risk factors (including obesity, diabetes, and tobacco use) are resulting in younger persons presenting with hypertension. Uncontrolled high blood pressure raises the risk for heart disease and stroke, which are leading causes of death and disability.

On the other hand, the relationship between salt and high blood pressure has been well documented since high levels of salt intake are linked to hypertension, which in turn is one of the causes of stroke, cardiovascular disease, kidney disease amongst others. High salt intake has also been linked to osteoporosis, kidney stones and stomach cancer.

South Africa is the first country globally to develop comprehensive, mandatory legislation to reduce sodium levels across a wide range of processed food categories, which involved the co-operation of many food industry members. While the country’s salt reduction approach has inspired the world, much more needs to be done to reduce salt intake and to encourage the food industry to reduce levels of salt in food.

For more information and media enquiries, please contact:

Mr Foster Mohale Health Departmental Spokesperson 0724323792 Foster.mohale@health.gov.za	Mr Doctor Tshwale Spokesperson for Health Minister 063 657 8487 Doctor.Tshwale@health.gov.za
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