

MEMBER NEWSLETTER

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taking care of our own

PRINCIPAL OFFICER'S NOTE

No country is immune to the spread of the novel coronavirus. The disease it causes was officially named COVID-19 by the World Health Organization (WHO). The outbreak has been declared a global public health emergency. COVID-19 and this year's influenza virus - a double whammy threat! In this edition we share important information to assist you to cope better during the pandemic and this flu season. Learn why our overall mental health is as important as our physical health and lastly, we create awareness around dental fillings.

Good health starts with you.

Warm Regards
Danie van Tonder

If there are any topics or member benefits that you would like to see more of in future newsletters, please send your suggestions to us at news@mhcmf.co.za.



NOVEL CORONAVIRUS AND THIS YEAR'S INFLUENZA VIRUS - A DOUBLE THREAT

During the last two decades, scientists have grown increasingly aware that viruses are emerging from the human-animal interface. Influenza "the flu" and COVID-19, the illness caused by the new coronavirus, are both infectious respiratory illnesses. Although the symptoms of COVID-19 and the flu can look similar, the two illnesses are caused by different viruses.

We are a month away from the start of this year's Influenza (flu) virus season, which will bring new viral strains to our country, South Africans could simultaneously be hit with a double viral shockwave this year.

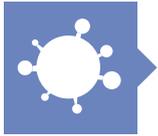
WHY IS THE ANNUAL FLU VACCINE MORE IMPORTANT THAN EVER BEFORE FOR HIGH RISK PEOPLE?

The confirmed cases of COVID-19 infection across the world are worrying. Equally worrying is that every year, **up to 650 000 people die of respiratory disease caused by the flu virus.**

Many of these deaths could have been prevented. Both are viral illnesses, so prevention methods are similar and very simple and cost-effective to implement. For starters, it's more important than ever that people have their 2020 flu vaccine at the start of the flu season, or as soon as possible thereafter. **Antibiotics cannot help us against viruses.**

It's critical that we all understand that antibiotics do not work against Novel Coronavirus or the flu (influenza virus). **They only work on bacterial infections**, so antibiotics should not be used as a means of prevention or treatment in the case of these illnesses.





WHAT MAKES COVID-19 SO TRICKY TO DEAL WITH?

There is limited information available about its clinical features and the severity of disease it causes. Recent data shows that more than 80% of people infected with COVID-19 have mild disease and recover. In about 5% of cases patients have critical disease and in 3.4% of cases the virus causes a fatal respiratory illness. The risk of death increases the older a person is. While, scientists scramble to develop a vaccine for COVID-19 via trials, international efforts are concentrated on early detection and quarantining infected patients.

WE ALL HAVE THE POWER TO PROTECT OURSELVES AND EACH OTHER AGAINST INFECTION. PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE.



SPREADING A PREVENTION MESSAGE STOPS THE SPREAD OF VIRUSES

The following eight simple, powerful habits - provide protection against coronaviruses, flu viruses and many other common pathogens.

- 1** Wash your hands often, especially after direct contact with people who are ill, or after being in environments where sick people are cared for, like hospitals. Remember to wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds - even if they are not visibly dirty.
- 2** Avoid close contact with people who have acute respiratory tract infections.
- 3** Avoid touching the eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- 4** Practice cough etiquette - when you cough, maintain your distance from others. Cover your mouth and nose with clothing, or with a flexed elbow or a tissue (discard it immediately) and wash your hands immediately afterwards.
- 5** Avoid spitting in public.
- 6** Clean and disinfect frequently-touched objects and surfaces.
- 7** Avoid eating raw or undercooked animal products. Handle raw meat, milk or animal organs with care to avoid cross-contamination with other uncooked foods. Use different cutting boards and knives for raw meat and other foods. Wash your hands between handling raw food - especially meat - and any other food.
- 8** Do not eat the meat that comes from animals that have died of diseases.



HOW AM I COVERED?

Treatment will be covered in line with your selected option benefits and as per the Prescribed Minimum Benefit level of care for the coronavirus and the flu. Please call 0861 000 300 for more info or the Covid 19 hotline at 0800 029 999.

Source: World Health Organisation - Coronavirus disease 2019



WILL VITAMIN C REALLY HELP TO KEEP WINTER ILLS AT BAY?

When you feel the sniffles starting, do you stock up on grapefruit, gulp down a few vitamin C supplements and hope it goes away?



CAN TAKING VITAMIN C COUNTERACT COLDS?

The common cold is a viral infection of your nose and throat (upper respiratory tract). Taking high doses of vitamin C has not been proven to prevent colds. However, vitamin C can help to shorten the duration of cold symptoms, like a runny nose and sore throat.

Don't confuse a cold with the flu: no immune-boosting supplements will prevent you from getting influenza. By getting a flu shot (particularly early April, before the virus spreads), you can protect yourself against catching the flu, or at least minimise the length and intensity of your symptoms.

Our bodies don't create vitamin C, but we need it for immune function, bone structure, iron absorption, and healthy skin. We get vitamin C from our diet, usually by consuming citrus fruits, strawberries, green vegetables, and tomatoes.

MINDFUL EATING DURING WINTER

Let's take a look at some of the best foods for improving your immune system:



YOGHURT: Probiotics are beneficial gut bacteria that support the immune system. Look out for yoghurts with added probiotics to reap the benefits.



LEGUMES AND WHOLEGRAINS: Legumes are beans, chickpeas, lentils, and so forth, and examples of wholegrains include oats and barley. These foods contain prebiotics (plant fibre) which support the growth of probiotics, and consequently a healthy immune system.



PLANT FOODS: Consuming vegetables and moderate amounts of fruit in a variety of colours can up your intake of the different vitamins and minerals necessary for a strong immune system. These foods also contain phytochemicals (active compounds) which benefit your health in a number of ways.



FISH: Fish is rich in nutrients like omega 3 fats, vitamins B12 and D, as well as the minerals like zinc, copper, and selenium. All of these nutrients contribute to overall health and consequently an increased resistance against illness.

Just remember, while a healthy diet all year around is important for overall health, getting a flu vaccination is the most important immunity-building measure you can take this season.



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

As many as one in six South Africans suffer from anxiety, depression or substance-use problems (and this does not include more serious conditions such as bipolar disorder or schizophrenia). Mental illness directly impacts both the affected person and those around them, with the effect extending to all spheres of life.

Did you know that there are effective treatments for many of these conditions?

WARNING SIGNS OF POSSIBLE MENTAL ILLNESS INCLUDE:

- **Sleep or appetite changes** — Dramatic sleep and appetite changes or decline in personal care
- **Mood changes** — Rapid or dramatic shifts in emotions or depressed feelings
- **Withdrawal** — Recent social withdrawal and loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed
- **Drop in functioning** — An unusual drop in functioning, at school, work or social activities, such as quitting sports, failing in school or difficulty performing familiar tasks
- **Trouble thinking** — Problems with concentration, memory or logical thought and speech that are hard to explain
- **Increased sensitivity** — Heightened sensitivity to sights, sounds, smells or touch; avoidance of over-stimulating situations
- **Apathy** — Loss of initiative or desire to participate in any activity
- **Feeling disconnected** — A vague feeling of being disconnected from oneself or one's surroundings; a sense of unreality
- **Illogical thinking** — Unusual or exaggerated beliefs about personal powers to understand meanings or influence events; illogical or "magical" thinking typical of childhood in an adult
- **Nervousness** — Fear or suspiciousness of others or a strong nervous feeling
- **Unusual behaviour** — Odd, uncharacteristic, peculiar behaviour

While warning signs alone cannot predict mental illness, they may indicate the need for further evaluation by a healthcare professional. Only a quarter of the people with a diagnosable mental disorder are receiving treatment. That's why it's important to get the right professionals involved.

Stigma around mental illness can make it hard for those affected to reach out for help. They often feel ashamed and mistakenly believe they should be able to overcome their illness with willpower alone. You can help your loved one realise that they have a medical condition, and that it is not a personal flaw or weakness.

GET ACTIVE TOGETHER

Exercise is key to good mental health throughout life. A great way of supporting someone with a mental illness is to make sure they are physically active, as many studies show that physical activity has antidepressant effects. While finding the motivation to exercise may be tough for a person affected by a mental illness, you can encourage them to get physically active to whatever extent they are able to – even if this means going for regular walks together.

GET SOME ECOTHERAPY

Research into so-called 'ecotherapy' has shown a strong connection between time spent in nature and reduced stress, anxiety, and depression.



HELP YOUR LOVED ONE TO FOLLOW A HEALTHY DIET

More and more, doctors are encouraged to discuss healthy eating with their patients alongside other clinical interventions. In fact, the growing field of nutritional psychiatry focuses on the impact of diet on mental illness.

ENSURE YOUR LOVED ONE HAS SUPPORT AT WORK

The labels given to a person with a mental health diagnosis – a largely invisible problem that few understand – can quickly erode compassion or understanding of how this disorder affects the sufferer in the workplace and in society.

HOW CAN WE PREVENT CAREGIVER-STRESS AND ENSURE GOOD COPING MECHANISMS?

While you're focusing on helping your loved one, it's also important to take care of yourself – physically and emotionally – so that you can better care for your loved one. Prioritise your own health through good nutrition, enough sleep, physical activity and making time to de-stress. Reach out for help when you need it and acknowledge your limits.

ADD THESE NUMBERS TO YOUR CONTACT LIST – WHO TO CALL FOR HELP

The South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) is Africa's largest mental health support and advocacy group. SADAG counsellors are available between 08:00 and 20:00, Monday to Sunday at 011 234 4837. The SADAG 24-hour helpline number is 0800 456 789. For a suicide emergency, contact SADAG on 0800 567 567.

Childline is an effective non-profit organisation that works to protect children from all forms of violence and to create a culture of protecting children's rights in South Africa. To speak to a Childline South Africa counsellor, call their national crisis line at 08000 55 555.

Contact Moto Health Care on 0861 000 300 to gain access to professional nurses who will assist you with any mental illness-related matters.



WHAT ARE RESTORATIONS?

Restorations, or otherwise known as fillings, are placed on teeth when they have decayed or fractured. The restorations placed on the teeth differ mostly according to the extent to which the tooth has decayed or fractured.

A filling is a way to restore a tooth that was damaged by decay, back to its normal function and shape. The dentist will remove the decayed tooth material, clean the affected area and then fill the cleaned out cavity with a filling material.

1. COMPOSITE MATERIAL (FILLINGS)

- Made of plastic and fine glass particles
- Lasts for at least 5 years

This is mostly for teeth with shallow cavities extending into the enamel and slightly into the dentine. This type of restoration material has different shades to go with different colours of teeth. The dentist will usually choose the material that looks like the patient's teeth, to make them look more natural.



ADVANTAGES

- Matches the colour of your teeth
- Can bond to your teeth
- Less drilling involved
- Can be repaired
- Good longevity

DISADVANTAGES

- Technique sensitive
- Placement takes longer than amalgam
- Meticulous oral hygiene maintenance required
- Tend to wear out sooner due to grinding and chewing

2. AMALGAM MATERIAL (FILLINGS)

These are the silver looking restorations placed on the teeth, mostly on very deep or large cavities extending into dentin layer of the teeth.

- Amalgam fillings are used in the back teeth
- Last up to 10 years

ADVANTAGES

- Stronger as they can withstand the forces of chewing
- Less costly than the alternatives
- Can be completed in one visit

DISADVANTAGES

- Amalgam fillings do not match the colour of your teeth
- Can tarnish over time
- Non-bonded



WHAT ARE CAVITIES?

A cavity is a hole that is left behind, after tooth decay destroys part of a tooth. Symptoms may include toothache, sensitivity to sweet, hot or cold food and drinks, and pain when chewing. Cavities can be prevented by brushing and flossing daily, and dental visits twice a year for cleaning and check-ups.

Source: Dental Risk Company (DRC)

UPDATE YOUR CONTACT AND BANKING DETAILS

Members must remember to let the Scheme know when their contact details have changed. If the Scheme doesn't have updated details for you, the Administrator is unable to communicate important information to you. It is just as important that you inform the Scheme if your banking details are changing or have changed. Please email the new details to info@mhcmf.co.za and remember to include your membership number on all correspondence to the Scheme.

Our whistle-blower hotline number 0800 000 436 or email tip-offs to mhcmf@tip-offs.com. All reports are confidential.

DISCLAIMER: The information is for educational purposes only, and is not intended as medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. If you are experiencing symptoms or need health advice, please consult a healthcare professional.

