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## June is Men's Health Month

### Why Early Detection Matters

June marks Men's Health Month - an important reminder for men to prioritise their health and make regular screenings part of their wellness routine. Many cancers affecting men can be successfully treated when detected early, yet too many men delay check-ups or ignore warning signs.

Prostate cancer remains the leading cancer affecting South African men, impacting approximately 1 in 18 men during their lifetime<sup>1</sup>. Risk increases with age, particularly after 50, and men with a family history or those of Black African descent may face a higher risk.

Other common cancers affecting men include colorectal (colon) cancer, lung cancer, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and skin cancer. Testicular cancer is also one of the most common cancers affecting younger men between the ages of 15 and 49, making regular self-examinations especially important<sup>2</sup>.

Many of these cancers develop with few or no symptoms in their early stages, which is why screening and preventative healthcare are so critical.

#### Healthcare professionals recommend:

- Annual prostate screenings from age 50, or earlier for higher-risk individuals.

- Colonoscopies from age 50.
- Monthly testicular self-examinations.
- Annual skin checks, particularly in South Africa's high UV environment.
- Maintaining a healthy lifestyle through exercise, balanced nutrition, limiting alcohol and avoiding smoking.

While male breast cancer is rare, men should also be aware that unusual lumps or changes in breast tissue should never be ignored.

Men's Health Month is ultimately about changing the conversation around men's healthcare - encouraging men to seek medical advice earlier, ask questions and prioritise preventative care.

Early detection remains one of the strongest defences against cancer. The sooner cancer is identified, the greater the chances of successful treatment and recovery.

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# June is National Blood Donor Month

## A Small Act That Saves Lives

June marks National Blood Donor Month in South Africa - a time dedicated to recognising the vital role blood donors play in saving lives every day. It also highlights the ongoing need for safe, regular blood donations to ensure hospitals and healthcare facilities can continue providing critical care<sup>3</sup>.

Blood donations are essential for a wide range of medical situations, including trauma care, surgeries, cancer treatment, childbirth complications and chronic illnesses. A single unit of donated blood can save up to three lives, making every donation incredibly valuable.

Despite the ongoing need, South Africa regularly faces blood shortages. The South African National Blood Service (SANBS) aims to collect thousands of units of blood daily to maintain safe blood stock levels, yet less than 1% of South Africans are active blood donors.

World Blood Donor Day, commemorated annually on 14 June, forms part of the month-long awareness campaign and serves as a reminder of the impact voluntary blood donors have on communities worldwide.

Many people are eligible to donate blood. According to SANBS, donors should generally:

- Be between 16 and 75 years old
- Weigh at least 50kg
- Be in good general health
- Lead a low-risk lifestyle
- Have eaten within four hours before donating

Blood donation is a simple process that takes only a short amount of time but can make a life-changing difference for patients in need.

National Blood Donor Month serves as an important reminder that donating blood is one of the simplest ways individuals can contribute to the health and wellbeing of others. Whether donating for the first time or as a regular donor, every contribution helps ensure that life-saving blood is available when it is needed most.

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## International Children's Day

### 1 June 2026

International Children's Day on 1 June is traditionally a celebration of childhood, hope and the potential of future generations. Yet globally, the realities facing many children paint a far more complex picture - one marked by violence, trauma, displacement, hunger, poverty and emotional distress.

Recent UNICEF reports<sup>4</sup> have highlighted the devastating impact that conflict, instability and humanitarian crises continue to have on children worldwide. Millions of children are growing up in environments shaped by fear, uncertainty and interrupted access to healthcare, education and safety.

While South Africa may not face armed conflict on the same scale as some regions globally, many local children still experience environments of violence, neglect, food insecurity, abuse and social instability. According to UNICEF South Africa<sup>5</sup>, violence against children remains one of the country's most urgent challenges, compounded by poverty, inequality, unemployment, substance abuse and gender-based violence.

Children exposed to ongoing trauma and instability often carry emotional and psychological scars long into adulthood. Healthcare experts continue to warn that chronic stress, violence and unsafe environments can negatively impact a child's mental health, emotional development, learning ability and long-term wellbeing.

International Children's Day therefore serves as more than a celebration - it is also a reminder of the collective responsibility to protect childhood itself.

#### In South Africa, this includes:

- Ensuring children have access to healthcare and nutrition
- Creating safe homes, schools, and communities
- Supporting emotional and mental wellbeing
- Protecting children from violence, abuse, and neglect
- Encouraging stable family and community support systems

The Department of Social Development has emphasised that every child has the right to protection, development, healthcare, education, dignity and participation in society<sup>6</sup>.

As the world continues to navigate economic pressures, social challenges and humanitarian crises, protecting children's wellbeing remains one of the most important investments any society can make.

International Children's Day reminds us that every child deserves not only to survive - but to feel safe, supported, heard and hopeful about the future.

Knowing your blood pressure is a simple but important step in supporting long-term wellbeing. Regular checks and small lifestyle changes can make a meaningful difference over time.

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## International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

### 26 June 2026

International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking - also known as World Drug Day - raises awareness around the global impact of substance abuse and the urgent need for prevention, treatment and support.

The 2026 theme, “The evidence is clear: invest in prevention. Break the cycle. #StopOrganizedCrime”, highlights the importance of addressing the root causes of drug abuse through education, early intervention, community support and accessible healthcare services.

In South Africa, substance abuse remains a significant public health and social challenge. Communities across the country continue to face the impact of alcohol and drug dependency, particularly among vulnerable youth populations. Drug abuse contributes to a range of broader societal concerns, including crime, violence, unemployment, family instability, mental health challenges and pressure on healthcare systems.

Healthcare professionals and community organisations continue to emphasise that prevention is far more effective than treatment alone. Early education, safe environments, positive social support and access to mental health resources all play a critical role in reducing the risk of substance abuse.

Importantly, there is growing recognition that substance use disorders should be approached as healthcare issues rather than purely criminal matters. Global and local awareness campaigns increasingly advocate for compassionate, evidence-based approaches that prioritise rehabilitation, treatment and recovery support over stigma and punishment.

#### **The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and South African health authorities continue to encourage:**

- Early intervention and prevention programmes
- Education around the risks of drug use
- Community and family support structures
- Access to counselling and rehabilitation services
- Reducing stigma associated with addiction and recovery

Young people remain particularly vulnerable to the effects of drug abuse, making schools, families, healthcare providers and communities critical partners in prevention efforts. Creating supportive spaces where individuals feel safe to seek help can make a meaningful difference in breaking cycles of addiction.

World Drug Day also highlights the link between illicit drug trafficking and organised crime networks, which continue to impact communities globally and locally. Addressing these challenges requires cooperation between governments, healthcare systems, law enforcement, schools and civil society organisations.

Ultimately, the message behind this year’s campaign is clear: prevention matters. By investing in education, awareness, mental health support and community wellbeing, societies can help reduce substance abuse and build healthier, safer communities for future generations.

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## References

### June is Men's Health Month

<sup>1</sup><https://cansa.org.za/mens-health/>

<sup>1</sup><https://www.medicalschemes.co.za/mens-health-month/>

For more information on cancer screenings and support services, visit CANSA.

### June is National Blood Donor Month

For more information or to find a donation centre near you, visit SANBS.

<https://www.gov.za/news/events/health-awareness-events/national-blood-donor-month>

### International Children's Day

For more information, please visit: <https://www.unicef.org/southafrica/child-protection>

<https://www.unicef.org/protection>

<sup>1</sup><https://www.unicef.org/southafrica/child-protection>

<sup>1</sup><https://www.dsd.gov.za/index.php/21-latest-news/361-social-development-wishes-children-well-on-the-celebration-of-international-children-s-day>

### International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking

For support or more information please visit: <https://www.sancanational.info/>

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### Human Capital

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