

# Wellness

FIRST MUTUAL  
HEALTH

MAY 2021

## Demystifying Hypertension

- Uncovering Asthma Misconceptions
- First Mutual Health Goes Beyond Traditional Medical Aid Cover
- COVID-19 Vaccine Q&As

# Demystifying Hypertension



Every year, 17 May is dedicated to World Hypertension Day (WHD) and the theme for 2021 is **Measure Your Blood Pressure Accurately, Control It, Live Longer**. The main objective of the day is to educate the public and increase awareness on hypertension, also known as high blood pressure and to mobilise national and local authorities to create enabling environments conducive to healthy behaviours.

Blood pressure is the force that a person's blood exerts against the walls of their blood vessels. This pressure depends on the resistance of the blood vessels and how hard the heart has to work. Hypertension occurs when blood pressure increases to unhealthy levels. Hypertension is the leading cause of mortality and disability all over the world and is at the top of the list among single risk factors accounting for cardiovascular disease deaths and second after smoking as a preventable cause of death. The World Hypertension League states that 50% of the hypertensive population worldwide are unaware of their condition.

## Causes of Hypertension

The causes of hypertension are often unknown but it is usually a result of an underlying condition. Chronic kidney disease is a common cause of hypertension as the kidneys can no longer filter out any fluid. The presence of excess fluid leads to hypertension. The following conditions can lead to hypertension:

- Sleep apnea (serious sleep disorder which breathing repeatedly stops and starts)
- Diabetes – due to kidney problems and nerve damage.
- Obesity
- Overactive thyroid gland
- Cancer of an adrenal gland
- Pregnancy
- Thyroid problems
- Certain medications • birth control, over the counter pain relievers, cold remedies
- Illegal drugs such as cocaine

## Risk factors of Hypertension

There are a number of factors that increase the risk of hypertension:

- **Age** – Hypertension is more prevalent in older people, especially those above 60

years of age. Blood pressure can increase with age because the arteries tend to stiffen and narrow due to a build up in plaque.

### • Abuse of alcoholic substances and tobacco

-Regular consumption of large quantities of alcohol and tobacco can increase one's chances of being hypertensive.

- **Gender** – Studies have shown that males have a higher risk of developing hypertension than females. This is only until women reach menopause.

- **Pre-existing health conditions** – Diabetes, chronic kidney disease, high cholesterol levels and cardiovascular disease can lead to hypertension, especially those of a certain age and gender.

- **Sedentary lifestyle** – being inactive and not participating in an exercise can increase one's risk of being hypertensive. When one is obese, more blood is needed to supply oxygen and nutrients to tissues.

- **Unhealthy diet** – A diet rich in salt and high fat can lead to hypertension. Low potassium intake can also risk high blood pressure.

- **Family history** - Hypertension tends to be hereditary.

- **Poorly managed stress can contribute to the risk of developing hypertension.**

- **Pregnancy** - A woman can develop hypertension at any stage of her pregnancy.

## Symptoms

Hypertension is often called the "silent killer" because people might not notice any symptoms. When left undetected, hypertension can damage the heart, blood vessels, kidney and other organs. Thus, it is vital to regularly check one's blood pressure. In rare and severe cases, a person may experience sweating, anxiety, sleeping problems and blushing. If high blood pressure becomes a hypertensive crisis, a person may experience headaches and nosebleeds. One should consult a medical doctor when they experience any of the above symptoms.

## Complications

Long term hypertension can cause complications where plaque develops on the walls of blood vessels causing them to narrow. When the blood vessels narrow, the heart has to pump harder in order to circulate blood, thus making the hypertension worse. Hypertension-related complications can lead to:

- Kidney failure
- Stroke
- Amputation
- Heart failure and heart attack
- Blindness
- Memory loss

## Treatment

Depending on the extent of the hypertension, doctors normally recommend low dose medication at first to manage a patient's blood pressure. The choice of medication depends on the individual and any underlying medical conditions they may experience. Anti-hypertensive medications usually have minor side effects.

## Prevention

### • Regular physical exercise

Everyone should engage in at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise every week for at least 5 days. Exercise can include walking, aerobics, jogging, cycling or swimming. Managing one's weight can reduce chances of being hypertensive.

### • Stress management

Learning how to manage stress can help one control their blood pressure. Meditation, Zumba, yoga, and leisurely walks can help reduce stress.

### • Healthy eating

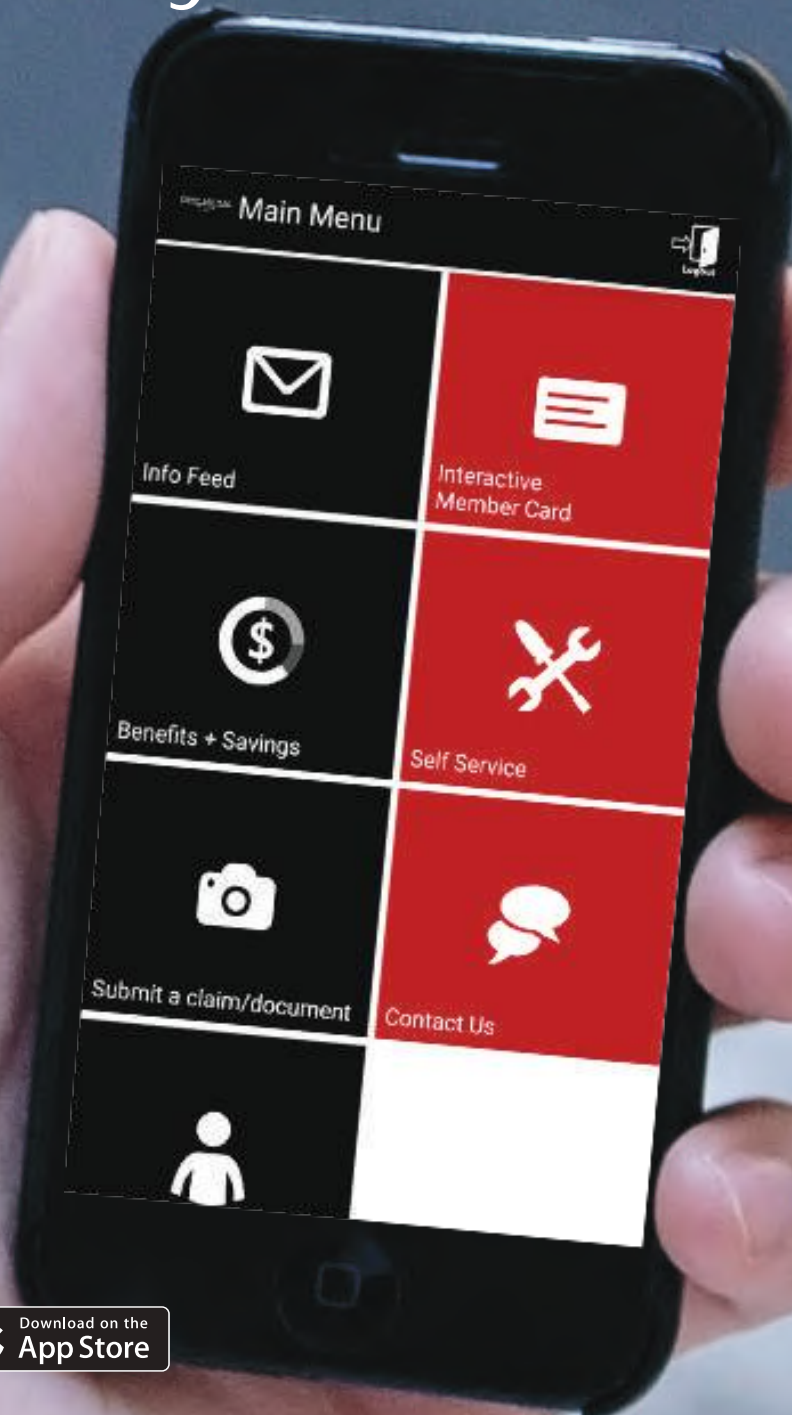
A balanced diet free from junk food, recreational drugs, and excessive alcoholic substances can reduce one's chances of elevated blood pressure and the complications that come with hypertension and other health issues. The World Health Organization recommends the intake of under 5g of salt a day. Lowering salt intake can be beneficial to people with hypertension and those without. People who have high blood pressure or people at high risk of developing high blood pressure should eat as little saturated and animal fat as possible. A healthy diet should include small portions: -

- Nuts, beans and pulses
- Fruits and vegetables
- Whole grain and high fibre foods
- Fish rich in omega-3
- Skinless poultry and fish
- Low fat dairy products.

Reference Mayo Clinic  
World Hypertension League



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# Uncovering Asthma Misconceptions



World Health Organization, under the Global Initiative for Asthma, (GINA) commemorates World Asthma Day (WAD). WAD is held each May to raise awareness of asthma worldwide.

Asthma is an inflammatory disease, in which a person experiences difficulty in breathing due to narrowing and swelling of the bronchial airways. Mucus then fills the airways, further reducing the amount of air that can pass through the airways. This can make it difficult for one to breathe and it may trigger coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath. The World Health Organization recognises asthma as a major public health importance. World Health Organization (WHO) statistics show that more than 339 million people globally, are affected by asthma. This year's World Asthma Day commemoration is being held under the theme "Uncovering Asthma Misconceptions." This theme seeks to call to action and address myths and common misconceptions that are widely held. Common asthma misconceptions include:

- Asthma sufferers should not exercise.
- Asthma is infectious.
- Asthma sufferers outgrow the disease as they grow older.

These are some of the myths that need to be addressed so that asthma sufferers can manage their lifestyle and enjoy optimal benefits from the major advances in the management of this condition. For some, asthma can interfere with daily activities and may lead to life-threatening asthma attacks.

## Causes of Asthma

This medical condition has no single cause. Researchers believe that this condition is caused by a combination of environmental and genetic factors. If a parent has asthma, their child is most likely to develop it. People who have experienced severe viral infections (for example respiratory syncytial virus) during their childhood, also have a higher chance of developing asthma.

## Risk Factors of Asthma

Several factors are thought to increase the chances of triggering asthma.

- Smoking
- Second-hand smoke exposure
- Exposure to air pollution
- Exposure to occupational triggers – chemicals
- Genetics
- Sinus or other respiratory tract infections
- Having another allergic condition – Hay fever or atopic dermatitis
- Obesity
- Gastroesophageal reflux disease
- Extreme weather conditions (high humidity or low temperatures)
- Uncontrolled emotions
- Increased movements

## Symptoms

Asthma symptoms vary from one person to the next. Asthma symptoms include:

- Painful and tightening chest
- Shortness of breath
- Trouble sleeping, caused by shortness of breath, wheezing, or coughing.
- Coughing
- Increased mucus production
- Rapid heart rate
- Wheezing attacks that can be caused by a respiratory virus (cold or the flu)
- Difficulty talking
- Fatigue
- Anxiety or panic
- Pale or sweaty face

However, some signs and symptoms are triggered by certain activities and situations such as exercising when the air is dry and cold, inhaling irritants such as cigarette smoke, air fresheners, household cleaning products, chemical fumes, gases, or dust. Some airborne substances such as pollen, cockroach waste particles of skin, dried saliva shed by pets can also induce asthma. One should see a doctor when experiencing shortness of breath, especially when doing minimal activities, rapid worsening of wheezing and when there is no improvement after using a quick-relief inhaler.

## Treatment

Asthma cannot be cured but its symptoms can be controlled allowing one to lead an optimal life. Asthma treatments fall into three primary categories: quick-acting treatments, breathing exercises, and long-term medications (maintenance inhalers). Doctors will recommend one or a combination of treatments based on age, asthma trigger types as well as the type of asthma. Good management with inhaled medications can help control asthma.

## Prevention

While there is no way to prevent asthma, you and your doctor can come up with a plan that can improve your life and prevent frequent asthma attacks that affect your life.

- Stay current with vaccinations that prevent flu and pneumonia
- Identify and avoid asthma triggers
- Take your medication as prescribed by the doctor.
- Eat a healthy balanced diet
- Maintain a healthy weight and exercise regularly
- Quit smoking
- Manage your emotions and stress.

Reference  
Mayo Clinic



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## First Mutual Health Goes Beyond Traditional Medical Aid Cover

As part of its strategy to provide additional value to its clients, First Mutual Health now offers members funeral cash benefit cover at no additional cost or waiting period for accidental death. The Fund has a three month waiting period for one to be eligible for this benefit. The age limit for the free funeral cover is 70 years. The benefit limits for the funeral cover vary according to the plan and category.

The claim amount will be deposited into the nominated beneficiary's account after submission of the following documents:

The following documents are required when claiming:

- 1 Burial order
- 2 Copy of deceased beneficiary's national identity card
- 3 Completed funeral assistance form
- 4 Beneficiary banking details

First Mutual Health is also offering the Lifemed Guarantor Cover/ Premium Waiver, a benefit that comes into effect upon the passing of the principal member. It guarantees all covered dependants free medical cover for a period of 3 months post death of the principal member.

This means beneficiaries of a principal member will not be removed from cover, giving them ample time to plan for their future. The amount paid in terms of cover will be based on the current contribution rates. In the case that there are any adjustments in the contribution rates the beneficiaries will pay the difference.

The following documents are required when claiming

- 1 Copy of Burial order
- 2 Completed Lifemed Form
- 3 Membership Update Form
- 4 Account Opening Form
- 5 Confirmation from

First Mutual Health is a leading medical aid insurance scheme in Zimbabwe that provides exceptional medical aid cover at competitive rates. It is a subsidiary of First Mutual Holdings Limited, a leading non-banking financial services Group that is committed to creating value through risk management, wealth creation, and wealth management.

With thousands of members cutting across a wide spectrum of the market from non-profit making organisations, government institutions, mining, education, individuals and commerce, we offer the perfect blend of experience, agility and innovation to service our membership exceptionally. The fund is ISO 9001:2015 certified in line with our commitment to continually improve service delivery to our stakeholders

For medical aid Enquiries visit any of our branches nationwide or contact us on the following numbers:

Call centre 08677007432 / 0242 251440  
WhatsApp only number 0778917309

## COVID-19 VACCINE programmes

First Mutual Health is pleased to inform all its members of the vaccination program in Bulawayo in partnership with Ekusileni Hospital and the City of Bulawayo Health Department. This is the second leg of the program initiated in April will commence on Monday 17 May to Friday 28 May 2021, with vaccination being conducted on week days only. Vaccinations are available for the 1st dose and 2nd dose for ages 18 years and above.

All members willing to be vaccinated may visit the Ekusileni Hospital, Corner Cecil Avenue & Old Gwanda Road. Telephone 0292 – 242037 / 241903.

Walk-ins whose names would not have been submitted in advance will also be vaccinated to ensure a wider reach.

In order to receive the vaccine members will be required to bring an identification document (National I.D, Drivers Licence or Valid Passport and a repeat prescription or medication bottle if you are on chronic medication. The vaccine will not be administered to lactating or pregnant women. Members who may be undergoing cancer treatment will be required to provide a letter from their doctor certifying fitness to receive the vaccine.

First Mutual Health is also pleased to inform its members that the same vaccination programme was conducted in Gweru and the surrounding areas in partnership with the City of Gweru Health Department.

The two vaccines approved by MCAZ which are currently available in the country, are Sinopharm and Sinovac. They will be administered depending on availability. Once the first dose has been given, each individual will be issued with a vaccination card which indicates the scheduled date for the second dose. Members based in Gweru (or visiting) are encouraged to take advantage of this vaccination period and contribute to building herd immunity in the country.

**For more information on the First Mutual Health vaccination programmes please contact Joseph Nago on email [jnago@firstmutual.co.zw](mailto:jnago@firstmutual.co.zw) telephone 0772 788 594 / (0542) 221005**



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# We help you Go Beyond

At First Mutual, when we say "Go beyond" we want you to see a world where your health is a priority because we know that your first wealth is health.

**Choose First Mutual for the wellness your life truly deserves.**



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To help minimise possible exposure to COVID-19 we encourage you to make use of our digital channels for queries and payments as listed below:

**Ecocash Biller Code 32807**

**Telecash Biller Code 100012**

**Banks Transfers Details;**

Bank: STANDARD CHARTERED  
Account name: FIRST MUTUAL HEALTH COMPANY  
Branch: AFRICA UNITY SQUARE  
Account Number: 0100206784000

Bank: FIRST CAPITAL BANK  
Account name: FIRST MUTUAL HEALTH COMPANY  
Branch: FCDA CENTRE (2157)  
Account Number: 1031434 Queries and Authorisations

Our contact centre will be available 7 days a week from 8am to 7pm. The contact center numbers are: 08677007432 and 0242 251 440

**Claims Quotations**

Claims quotations for authorisation may be emailed to: [claims1@firstmutualhealth.co.zw](mailto:claims1@firstmutualhealth.co.zw)  
Every effort will be made to respond to the emails within an hour.

**Contribution Payments**

The proof of payment should be emailed to [debtors@firstmutualhealth.co.zw](mailto:debtors@firstmutualhealth.co.zw)

**General Enquiries**

Enquiries may also be sent to [info@firstmutualhealth.co.zw](mailto:info@firstmutualhealth.co.zw)



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