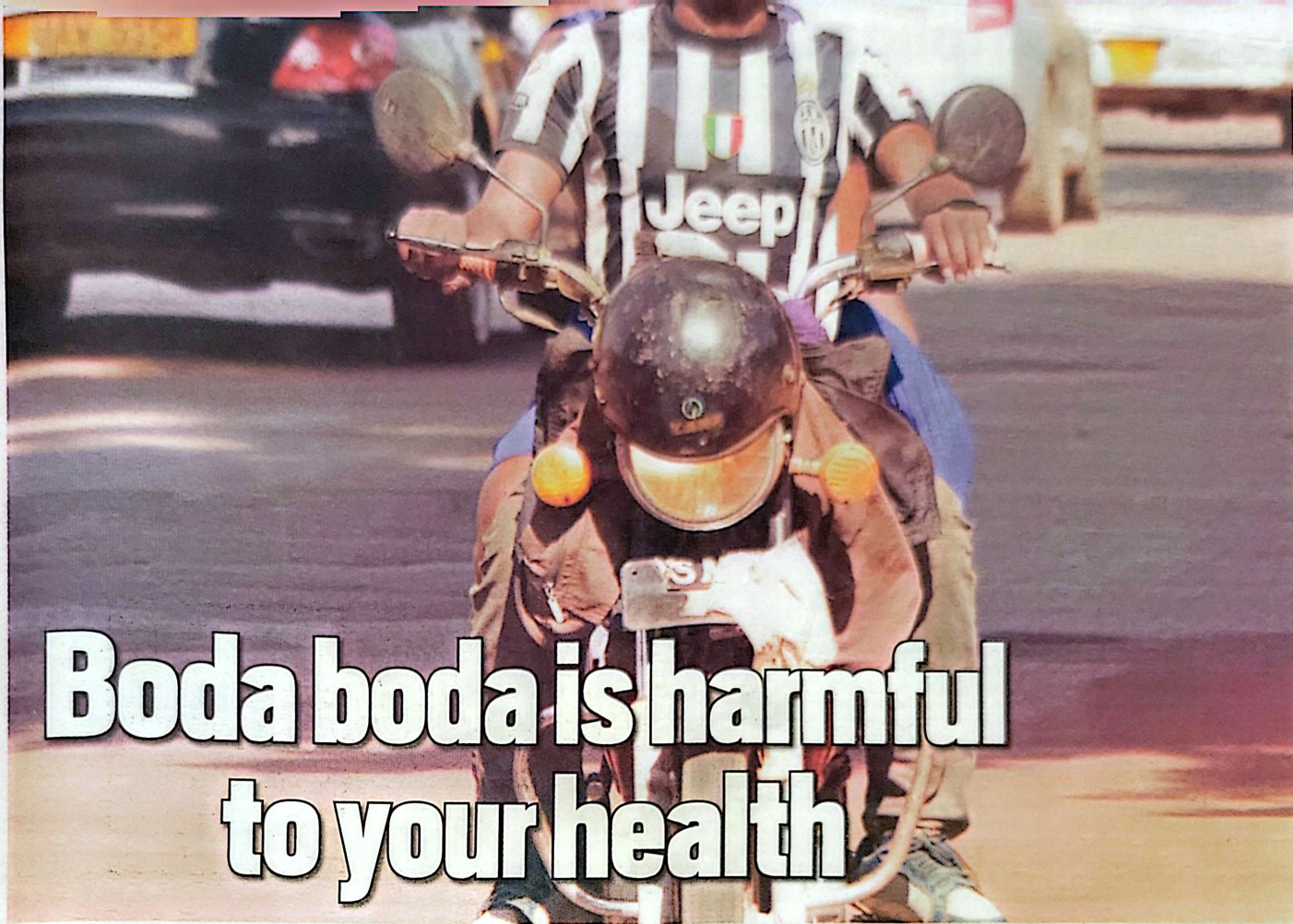




Boda boda is harmful to your health

BY ESTHER OLUKA
eoluka@ug.nationmedia.com

Eight-year-old Sheila Nassanga is a primary school pupil in one of Kampala's suburbs. Every morning, she is transported to school by Musa, a boda boda rider.

In the past, Nassanga complained of chest pain which was soon followed by a chronic cough. The condition prompted Nassanga's mother, Rose Nankya, to seek

a doctor's opinion.

"During the examination, the doctor realised Sheila had difficulty in breathing and was gasping for air," Nankya says.

The doctor revealed that travelling on a bodaboda was dangerous for her health.

"He said the chest complications were a result of the cold wind Sheila was being exposed to every morning," Nankya says. As a precautionary measure, Nankya

was advised to dress her daughter in a sweater and jacket before embarking on school journeys.

Because Nankya adhered to this advice, her daughter has not had any more complications.

Ear, nose and throat ailments

Dr Fred Bisso, the president of the Uganda Medical Association and a consultant ear, nose and throat (ENT) sur-

geon notes that whether one is the rider or passenger on a boda boda, they are all prone to suffering the same health issues.

Dr Bisso says riders suffering from asthma and other lung diseases are sensitive to cold air and can easily get breathing complications.

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"I often get chest complications because of the dust. Recently, I bought a mask to shield my nose while riding."
KASSIMU SSOZI



"I got tuberculosis and the doctor said it was as a result of exposure to strong winds. I now wear a warm jacket."
FRANCISCO MUWANIKA



"I have suffered from a number of respiratory issues because of my job. I try to limit them by often wearing a heavy sweater."
GERSHOM NDYOMUGENYI

Boda bodas pose serious health complications

Motorcycles, commonly referred to as boda bodas are a common means of transport in the country. Because of their design, the riders and passengers are left to ride in the open, leading to a number of ailments some as serious as TB.

...FROM COVER

The other category inclined to exposure to cold air is riders with a hyperactive upper airway (nose and throat).

"This type can suffer nasal blockage, discharge as well as over sneezing. In the long run, they develop diseases such as sinus infection which may result into complications requiring surgery," he says.

Continuous irritation of the throat can result into cough and dryness of the throat which causes discomfort.

The third category of people at risk are riders who easily react to dust.

Dr Bisso says these too can easily get nasal blockage, discharge and may also encounter tendencies of sneezing.

"The long term effect of nasal blockage, discharge and sneezing is hearing impairment. Frequent episodes of this may lead to a permanent hearing loss," Bisso says.

Preventive measures

Dr Bisso advises frequent boda boda users to always wear a warm jacket, scarfs and sweater to keep warm during the journey.

Helmets should also be a priority as they help limit the amount of wind one's head is exposed to.

The doctor also advises that if one is sensitive to cold environments or suffers from chest complications, the best preventive measure is to

simply stop using boda bodas and opt for other means of transportation.

Journalist experience

Many journalists testify to using boda bodas while working on assignments which usually require movement from one place to another sourcing for information.

For Dominic Eric Bukunya, a photojournalist, the bodabodas were very helpful in transporting him to different places to take pictures.

"I would always make myself comfortable by sitting in a slouched position (with his head and shoulders bent)," Dominic says, adding: "However, in 2015, I started experiencing intense lower back pain."

Bukunya decided to seek medical attention and was put under physical therapy (treatment of an ailment through physical methods such as exercise and massage).

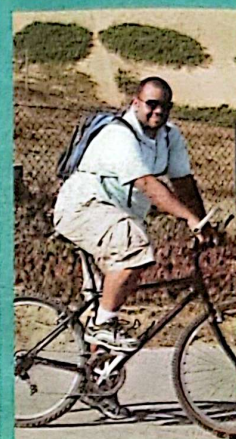
The therapy cost him Shs70,000 per session. He would go for it three times a week. Financial constraints however propelled him to stop the treatment after two weeks.



Wearing a helmet will protect your head from injuries. Buy and carry your personal helmet for all boda boda rides.
PHOTOS BY RACHEL MABALA



Fertility concerns



Today, there are numerous reports circulating on different media platforms regarding how longterm riding can result in erectile dysfunction.

Some urologists (specialists of the urinary tract and external genital organs) who spoke to Daily Monitor could not attest to the claims reasoning that some of such reports lacked in-depth analysis and insight.

Urologists, however, confirm that urethra injuries may occur as a result of riding bicycles. The issue often surfaces in vertically challenged men who ride bigger bicycles for a long period of time and constantly subject their genitals to pressure.

The eyes

There are a number of eye injuries one is prone to getting as a result of riding on a motorcycle since it has no windscreen.

Dr Anne Ampaire Musika, an ophthalmologist says eyes maybe hit by the fast moving cold air causing them to turn red in colour. For those with an allergy, the cold air can cause itching.

Dr Musika adds that the fast moving wind causes tears to evaporate leading to dry eyes which are then vulnerable to injury and infection because of the reduced lubrication and cleansing effect

derived from the tears. The fast moving wind also carries dust which enters the eyes. "The dust not only irritates the eye but also carries germs," Dr Musika says.

Flying objects, such as, insects, sticks and stones may easily access and harm the eyes. Dr Musika notes because there is no housing around the passenger, any shock or shaking sends either the rider or passenger flying in any direction and without a helmet, one is prone to sustaining crush wounds involving the eyeball, the eyelids or the bones of the socket for the eye.

"There is also the risk of having either the eyelids or eyeball torn. For some, the

eye may be lost or need to be removed depending on the severity of the injury. The eye socket may also be distorted requiring repair or refashioning.

Preventive measures

Dr Musika advises both riders and passengers to always wear helmets. It is also important to wear a pair of goggles or glasses, preferably plastic, that will help protect the eyes from wind, dust or any other foreign objects.

These should be purchased from registered optical shops as one will also be advised on the suitable type for both their eyes and face.

