



PLAN FOR A HEALTHY 2018

AS ONE ENTERS THE NEW YEAR THERE IS NEED TO KEEP ONE'S HEALTH ON CHECK TO AVOID PREVENTABLE SICKNESSES AND GET EARLY TREATMENT

2018 IS HERE AND THE TYPICAL NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS COMPRISE INCREASING ONE'S FINANCES, GET MARRIED, BUY A CAR AND BUILD A HOUSE. WELL, AT THE CENTRE OF THESE RESOLUTIONS SHOULD BE ONE'S HEALTH, AFTER ALL HEALTH IS WEALTH, WRITES JACQUILINE EMODEK

The state of a woman's health is pivotal for the wellbeing of a family. The former US first lady Michelle Obama aptly expressed this when she said: "Families are drowning and we cannot have a healthy country if women are not healthy."

According to World Health Organisation (WHO), the top health concerns for women and girls are: reproductive health, maternal health, sexually transmitted infections and breast and cervical cancers as well as non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and HIV. These can be avoided or reduced

through adopting health-promoting lifestyles as explored below.

Antenatal care and pregnancy
In Uganda, for every 100,000 women who give birth, 343 die, according to the Uganda Demographic Health Survey 2016. This is mainly due to hypertensive disorders of pregnancy, especially eclampsia where a mother suffers convulsions and liver damage.

Pre-eclampsia is a disorder of pregnancy in which a mother suffers from high blood pressure before during or after delivery. Dr Joseph Nsenga, a gynaecologist, says with

eclampsia, a woman can die within six hours of onset if not helped.

Other causes of pregnancy-related death are excessive bleeding before, during and after childbirth, unsafe abortions, infections, especially after delivery and underlying conditions such as anaemia.

In order to prevent pregnancy-related complications early, women are advised to seek antenatal care as soon as they realise they are pregnant.

According to WHO guidelines, a woman should attend at least four antenatal visits. During the visits, a mother receives Tetanus Toxoid, a vaccine against neonatal tetanus. Other services offered during antenatal visits are deworming, iron supplements and intermittent preventive treatment to reduce the risk of malaria and maternal and foetal anaemia.

Antenatal care also includes the prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV. This is also an entry point for care not only for mothers living with HIV, but their partners and new-born babies as

YOUR HEALTH

The checklist

There are basic regular health screening, exams and tests. One should focus on reproductive system, ailments, breast and cervical cancer. The screenings can help detect problems early, when your chances are better.

Family planning

This is key in maintaining good health and avoiding unplanned pregnancies, which account for 44% of pregnancies in the country. Nsenga notes that unplanned pregnancies are the main cause of unsafe abortions as well as, maternal and infant deaths. Unsafe abortions contribute 26% to maternal mortality in Uganda and the Government spends sh75b in treating unsafe abortions. Unplanned pregnancies can be prevented by the use of contraceptive methods. These methods include implants, condoms,

injectables, pills as well as surgical procedures such as vasectomy and tubal ligation. Nsenga encourages women to discuss with qualified medical personnel when choosing a contraceptive method.

Contraceptives are also a tool for women's reproductive empowerment which enables them to negotiate for safe sex. However, there are cases when a woman of girl may fail to negotiate for safe sex and end up as a victim of rape and defilement.

Nsenga advises that if one is raped, they should visit a government health facility for Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) to prevent them contracting HIV. One should also take emergency contraceptives within 72 hours after unprotected sex to avoid unwanted pregnancies.

Regular check-ups for STIs

"Have yourself and your partner screened annually for HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Infections such as gonorrhoea, syphilis, herpes and hepatitis B," Nsenga notes.

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editor's letter

Make health a priority in 2018

It has been argued that the measure of every family's ability to raise a better generation than the former lies in the strength of its women.

That withstanding, another 356 days lie ahead of us as an opportunity to make better choices, accomplish dreams and take a hold of our aspirations and run the race again.

However, without good health, all can be in vain. Reproductive, mental and psychological, menstrual and cardiac health must be made deliberate daily life practices.

Your health should be your lifestyle, for the biggest percentage of the diseases we suffer are preventable. It is your health that will determine how far you will go in achieving your 2018 aspirations. Do not leave it chance, take charge of your health.

We wish you a happy and prosperous New Year. Thank you for being a part of this family.

Her Vision team

THINK ABOUT IT

New Year is not about changing the dates but direction; it's not about changing the calendar but ommitment; it's about changing the ions but attitude.

Anonymous

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**YOUR QUESTIONS
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AN EXPECTANT MOTHER SHOULD ATTEND AT LEAST FOUR ANTENATAL CHECK-UPS TO HAVE HEALTHY BIRTHS
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STIs is pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which is often misdiagnosed as a urinary tract infection (UTI). "Pelvic inflammatory disease spreads during sexual intercourse. It starts from the upper vagina, spreads to the cervix, endometrium (lining of the womb), the tubes and the area adjacent to the uterus.

If a PID is not treated, it can block the tubes leading to infertility. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, one in eight women with a history of PID has difficulty getting pregnant. "Early interventions are key. If you have an abnormal discharge, lower abdominal pain, painful sex, fever, seek medical intervention immediately and avoid taking herbs," Nsenga advises.

Women should also watch out for UTIs and fungal infections such as candidiasis. UTIs present with painful passage of urine, lower abdominal pain, burning sensation when passing urine and waking up more than four times in the night to urinate. On the other hand, fungal infections manifest with a milky discharge and itching in the vagina.

All females have yeast cells in small numbers and usually one's immunity prevents them from multiplying. However, there are instances when the body fails to prevent the multiplication of yeast cells leading to an infection. For example, during pregnancy when a woman's immunity is compromised and in the days after one's menstruation period when her pH changes

Other causes of infections are having sex with multiple partners, wearing tight undergarments and taking antibiotics because they suppress the immune system.

Take plenty of water
Nsenga recommends that women

TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR HEALTH

should take plenty of water, that is at least three litres of water daily to flush bacteria from the urinary tract. "There is bacteria that reside in the urinary tract, but when you takes water they are expelled in urine and do not overgrow to become harmful," he says.

Water is also good for hydration since one's body lose water through sweating, urinating and release of stool.

Menstrual hygiene

Nsenga notes that it is important

to mind one's hygiene to avoid getting infections especially from menstrual blood. The blood gets contaminated after leaving the body since the pad is wet.

Experts recommend that a sanitary pad should be changed every six hours and two hours for a tampon. When using reusable pads, one's menstrual hygiene should be heightened as opposed to when using disposable products. These pads should be changed every two to six hours depending on one's flow and washed regularly

and dried in the sun to avoid multiplication of bacteria.

Cancer screening

Women should regularly check for breast and cervical cancers. According to International Agency for Research on Cancer, 2,420 women were diagnosed with breast cancer in the country in 2012.

Dr Joseph Kigula, a radiation oncologist, says breast cancer can be prevented by doing a breast self-examination monthly. This can be done seven to 10 days after one's period and report any changes to a doctor. Such changes include; a lump an inverted nipple, rash around the nipple and discharge from the nipple which is watery or blood-stained.

One should limit their alcohol intake, avoid smoking, be physically fit, breastfeed, limit hormonal therapy and avoid exposure to radiation.

Cervical cancer accounts for 80% of all cancers in women worldwide and 40% of all cancer; according to the Kampala's cancer registry. This cancer is caused by the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) spread through sexual intercourse

The main risk factors for the disease include sexual intercourse at an early age, multiple sexual partners or having a partner with multiple sexual partners, presence of other sexually transmitted infections, a weakened body

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Prevention of UTIs

After a long call, Nsenga advises that females should wipe from the front to the back discard the tissue. Then get more tissue and wipe again in the same order. If one is using water, they should wash their hands thoroughly with soap before washing the front (genitals) again.

"There are millions of germs in the anal canal while the front is cleaner, so once you touch that part and use the same hands to touch your vagina then you have transferred the germs, which can cause infections."

One should wear cotton panties, loose-fitting trousers, avoid prolonged use of wet

workout gear to reduce moisture in the genital area. Experts also advise against sleeping in panties when one is not in their menstrual period.

Nsenga recommends cleaning oneself before sex as well as passing out urine before and after sex. The urethra is located close to the anus and so bacteria from the large intestines can escape to the anus and enter the urethra then into the bladder, during sexual intercourse.

Therefore, urinating after sex can flush out bacteria that may have entered the urethra. If diagnosed with a UTI, consult a doctor rather than self-prescribing.