

WORLD HEART DAY

New Vision
ADVERTISER SUPPLEMENT

Heart conditions on the rise

By Jacqueline Emodok

Did you know that the heart is the strongest muscle? Based on its weight; with all muscles of the jaw working together, it can close the teeth with force as great as 25 kilogrammes on the incisors or 90.7 kg on the molars.

The heart pumps blood to all parts of the body. It can beat for over three billion times nonstop in a person's life. It goes without saying that the heart is the engine of the body.

No wonder, the world set aside today as the World Heart Day. It is being commemorated under the theme: *At the heart of health*. The theme highlights the fact that a healthy heart is crucial for a healthy body.

"This year's theme views the heart as an engine of the body; it is centrally located and its main function is to pump blood to all parts of the body. Therefore, for any part of your body to be healthy, the heart must be healthy," Dr Michael Oketcho, a consultant cardiovascular

surgeon at the Uganda Heart Institute (UHI), says.

On this day, we pause to remind ourselves about the heart, possible conditions that can affect it and in turn affect our health. As we think about the heart, people also reflect on what they can do as individuals to improve the state of health of their heart.

"We want people to know that to a greater extent, they are in control of what happens to their heart. There are many preventive measures they can take, even those who have been affected already can undertake measures to improve on the health of their hearts," Oketcho explains.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), cardiovascular diseases (CVD) are the number one cause of death annually. An estimated 17.7 million people died from CVDs in 2015, representing 31% of all global deaths. Of these, 7.4 million were due to coronary artery heart disease and 6.7 million were due to stroke.

Hypertension cases highest

In the 2016/17 financial year, the Uganda Heart Institute received 15,113 patients and the major heart

conditions were hypertension (54.4%), dilated cardiomyopathy (23%), hypertensive heart disease (15.3%), and rheumatic heart disease (5.6%).

The majority of the patients were female, accounting for 58.7%, men at 41.3% and children 15.1%. The majority of the adults (over 60%)



A mother smiles after her application for sponsorship of her child's heart operation had been accepted by a non-governmental organisation

STAY AWAY FROM A LOT OF SUGAR BECAUSE WHEN IT IS IN EXCESS, THE BODY CONVERTS SUGAR TO FATS, WHICH CLOGS THE VEINS

60%) had hypertension. Currently, the institute can handle about 85% of heart conditions.

Oketcho says heart conditions are classified as congenital heart defects and acquired heart conditions. A congenital heart defect is a problem with the structure of the heart and it is present at birth, while an acquired heart condition, like its name suggests, is developed as one gets by in life.

Acquired heart conditions include ischemic heart disease, also known as coronary heart disease, a condition when the heart does not get enough oxygen due to accumulation of fatty material in one's arteries.

"Oxygen is delivered to the heart through blood so when this is compromised by narrowing of blood vessels through deposition of