

A VOIR OCTOBER

NEWSLETTER



Mental Health Awareness

Mental health challenges continue to rise across South Africa, affecting individuals, families, and workplaces. With one in three South Africans likely to experience a mental health condition in their lifetime, and only one in ten receiving treatment, the need for open dialogue and accessible support has never been greater. Mental health influences productivity, relationships, and overall wellbeing, making it a critical workplace priority. This month encourages us to normalise conversations about mental health, promote Employee Assistance Programmes, and encourage practices that support emotional resilience, such as mindfulness, regular breaks, and stress-management routines.



[Read More on our website](#)

● Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Breast cancer remains the most common cancer affecting South African women, and early detection continues to be the strongest predictor of survival. Many women still delay screening due to fear, stigma, or limited access to healthcare services, making awareness and education essential. Breast cancer accounts for roughly a quarter of all cancers diagnosed in women, and early detection can increase survival rates to above 80%. As we observe Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we encourage regular mammograms for women over 40, promote self-examination, and share information on accessible screening facilities. Empowering women with knowledge and support can save lives.

Understanding risk factors is an important part of awareness. Age, family history, lifestyle factors such as alcohol use and physical inactivity, and certain genetic markers can increase risk — but breast cancer can affect any woman, even without known risk factors. This is why routine screening and self-examination are vital.

National Nutrition is vital

Nutrition plays a central role in long-term health, yet South Africa faces a dual burden of obesity and malnutrition. With 68% of women and 31% of men classified as overweight or obese, and 27% of children under five experiencing stunting, the impact of poor nutrition is far-reaching. National Nutrition Week reminds us of the importance of balanced diets, reduced sugar intake, and healthier food choices both at home and in the workplace. Encouraging nutritious snacks, sharing affordable meal ideas, and promoting awareness around hidden sugars can help employees make informed decisions that support their wellbeing.



World Food Day

16 October

Food security remains a pressing issue in South Africa, with one in five households experiencing food insecurity. Rising food prices and limited access to nutritious foods continue to affect vulnerable communities. World Food Day calls attention to the importance of sustainable food systems, community support, and equitable access to healthy meals. Workplaces can contribute by supporting food-security initiatives, promoting community gardens, and sharing affordable nutrition guides. Ensuring that families have access to nutritious food strengthens communities and supports national development.



WORLD



SIGHT DAY

World Sight Day
8 October

● Lessons

Eye health is often overlooked, yet most vision impairment is preventable. Conditions such as diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, and cataracts significantly affect quality of life and productivity. In South Africa, diabetes remains a leading cause of blindness, and regular eye examinations are essential for early detection. World Sight Day encourages us to prioritise eye health by scheduling annual eye tests, practising screen-break habits, and educating employees about the importance of diabetic eye care. Protecting our vision is a lifelong commitment that begins with awareness.

World Arthritis Day

12 October

Musculoskeletal conditions, including arthritis, are rising due to sedentary lifestyles, ageing populations, and workplace strain. Arthritis affects approximately one in seven adults, and back pain remains one of the leading causes of workplace absenteeism. World Arthritis Day highlights the importance of movement, ergonomics, and early intervention. Encouraging stretching routines, promoting ergonomic workstations, and supporting low-impact exercise can significantly reduce discomfort and improve mobility. Small daily habits can make a meaningful difference in long-term joint health.



World Spine Day

16 October

Back pain is one of the most common health challenges in modern workplaces, often linked to poor posture, stress, and prolonged sitting. Globally, spinal issues rank among the top causes of disability. World Spine Day encourages individuals to prioritise spinal health through posture awareness, ergonomic seating, and regular movement breaks. Simple stretching routines and mindful sitting habits can significantly reduce discomfort and improve overall wellbeing. Protecting spinal health is essential for maintaining productivity and quality of life.

World Restart a Heart Day

16 October

CPR awareness can be the difference between life and death. Bystander CPR has been shown to double or even triple survival rates, yet many workplaces lack trained first responders. World Restart a Heart Day emphasises the importance of CPR training, emergency preparedness, and visible emergency protocols. Offering first-aid courses, ensuring emergency numbers are easily accessible, and conducting regular safety drills can help create a safer workplace environment.

- **National Emergency Medical Services Day**

Emergency medical services play a vital role in responding to accidents, health crises, and life-threatening situations. Response times vary across provinces, making workplace preparedness essential. National Emergency Medical Services Day encourages organisations to review emergency protocols, ensure first-aid kits are fully stocked, and train staff in basic emergency response. Building a culture of preparedness enhances safety and ensures that employees are equipped to act quickly and confidently during emergencies.

- **World Osteoporosis Day**

Bone health becomes increasingly important with age, especially for women, but prevention should begin early. Osteoporosis affects one in three women and one in five men over the age of 50, and vitamin D deficiency is common in urban populations. World Osteoporosis Day encourages individuals to adopt habits that strengthen bone health, including calcium-rich diets, safe sunlight exposure, and regular strength-training exercises. Prioritising bone health today helps prevent fractures and mobility challenges later in life.



World Stroke Day

29 October

Stroke is one of South Africa's leading causes of death and disability, affecting thousands each year. A stroke occurs when blood flow to the brain is interrupted, and rapid response is critical — every minute counts. High blood pressure, diabetes, smoking, obesity, and inactivity are major contributors to stroke risk, making prevention a key priority. The FAST method — Face drooping, Arm weakness, Speech difficulty, Time to get help — remains the simplest way to recognise symptoms quickly. Workplaces can help reduce risk by encouraging regular blood pressure checks, promoting heart-healthy habits, and sharing educational resources during National Stroke Week. World Stroke Day is a powerful reminder that awareness, early action, and healthier daily choices can save lives and protect long-term wellbeing.



● Reflections

World Polio Day highlights one of public health's greatest victories and the ongoing responsibility to protect future generations. Polio once caused widespread paralysis among children, but South Africa has not recorded a wild polio case since the late 1980s, and the African region was certified free of wild poliovirus in 2020. Still, maintaining high vaccination coverage remains essential, especially as pockets of vaccine-derived poliovirus continue to appear in parts of Africa. South Africa's Expanded Programme on Immunisation provides free polio vaccines to all children, making access straightforward for families. Workplaces can support this effort by sharing vaccination schedules and encouraging parents to keep children's immunisations up to date. World Polio Day reminds us that eradication requires vigilance — and strong community commitment to routine vaccination.

October reminds us that health is a shared responsibility. By staying informed, prioritising prevention, and supporting one another, we build stronger workplaces and healthier communities. Avoir remains committed to empowering organisations with knowledge that drives wellbeing, resilience, and long-term health.