

YOUR HEALTH

Bilharzia and how to beat it

BILHARZIA is a parasitic infestation with the bilharzia parasite called schistosoma.

There are two important types of bilharzia parasites in South Africa: *Schistosoma haematobium*, which is the cause of urinary bilharzia, and *Schistosoma mansoni*, the cause of intestinal bilharzia.

Rivers, streams, dams and canals throughout most of KwaZulu-Natal are infected with bilharzia parasites.

How do you become infected

The bilharzia parasite completes its life cycle partly in humans and partly in snails.

Humans get infected by swimming, bathing, drinking or coming into contact with water from infested rivers, streams, dams or canals. The parasite enters the body through the skin.

Clinical features of bilharzia infestation

Itching and irritation when parasite enters the skin.

Blood in the urine or stool.

Fever and coughing after two to three weeks.

Listlessness and fatigue.

Sleepiness and poor mental concentration.

A dull ache may develop over the lower back or there may be abdominal pain.

Diarrhoea or passing urine frequently.

Weight loss is common.

High fever after two weeks if there is a severe infestation, that is a high level of parasites in the body.

Complications of bilharzia infestation

Can damage the bladder and kidneys.

Can cause sterility.

Prevention of bilharzia

Do not swim or bath in water from rivers, streams, dams and canals in endemic areas.

Collect water in the cooler time of the day and near fast-flowing water. Boil water before drinking.

Do not contaminate dams or banks of rivers or streams with human urine and excreta.

People exposed to infested water should wear rubber boots and gloves. They must dry themselves well with a towel after contact with water.

Be careful when collecting water plants including watercress.

Seek medical advice as soon as possible if you suspect bilharzia infection

Control of parasites

Keep the side of dams clean and free of undergrowth to prevent snails from breeding.

Remove vegetation at the side of rivers if possible.

Chlorinate water.

Use netting to stop snails from entering the inlet pipes to swimming pools or tanks.

YOVINI PILLAY

RESERVOIR Hills now has a new clinic at the corner of Riddick Avenue and Mountbatten Drive.

It has consulting rooms, waiting rooms, a dispensary, and emergency rooms, and it

New clinic for Reservoir Hills

also caters for people with special needs.

Ward Councillor for Reservoir Hills Jayraj Bachu said: "I am thrilled to have come to

this milestone in delivery.

"We have moved from a crowded two-room facility to a place that is modern and much more service-friendly."

The new clinic is also more accessible, than the old one.

Temba Mtchali, a community leader, said people had to walk far to get to the old

clinic. "The community has benefited by getting a clinic which is in walking distances," said Mtchali.

Bachu said: "I hope Reservoir Hills residents will make good use of these facilities and take care of them."



POET: Gcina Mhlope served as master of ceremonies at the Pan African Women's Day celebration at The Playhouse last week. Mhlope also took part in a drama piece about the Ingcugce women's regiment

Picture: THEMBA KHUMALO

Bus brings hope to the needy

GABI KHUMALO

THE Gender Bus campaign officially rolled into action last week, taking 200 food parcels to the needy of Amaoti and Bhambayi.

Timed to coincide with Women's Month, the campaign will involve women visiting homes in townships across KwaZulu-Natal and providing help to the needy.

This may include bathing the sickly and elderly or providing food.

Aboard the bus for the launch were women from the Office of the Premier and from municipalities in the province.

Representatives of the departments of Social Welfare and Development and Home Affairs were there to help with problems concerning grants and identity documents.

The first people to benefit were 45 families from Bhambayi, who received parcels at the area's drop-in centre.

The balance of the parcels were delivered to other areas in Amaoti.

Ward 57 Cllr Nondumiso Cele said the area was blighted by poverty, with people made homeless by political violence, Aids and the abuse of women and children.

"There are families who go to bed on an empty stomach

and these parcels will make a huge difference, especially for people on medication," said Cele.

One of the recipients, Dumisani Ngcobo, who collects his TB medication from the drop-in centre, said his family

relied on his grandmother's pension and they sometimes struggle for food.

Ngcobo, 26, said: "Our neighbours who usually help us with food when there is none at home will have a break for a few weeks.

"The parcels came at the right time for me: As a TB patient, I need food before taking my medication," said Ngcobo.

Samukele Khumalo, Gender Co-ordinator with the city's Community Participation and Action Support Unit, said the unit would continue to help empower women.

She encouraged women's organisations to contact the unit for assistance.

"Poverty is crippling women and we urge women's organisations to contact us so we can put them on our database and address their basic needs," said Khumalo.

Women's organisations can contact the city's Community Participation and Action Support Unit at 031 311 6169/94 or fax 031 311 6194.

“**There are families who go to bed on an empty stomach and these parcels will make a huge difference**”

Cllr Nondumiso Cele

Zulu regiment provides a sharp lesson

THOBEKA SHANGASE

WOMEN'S Month was launched at The Playhouse last week, amid music, dance, speeches and a look back at the history of a largely unheralded female Zulu regiment.

The launch coincided with Pan African Women's Day and celebrated women on the continent and more specifically the Ingcugce, a controversial female regiment under King Cetshwayo, in the 19th century.

The regiment was made up of women who were given as prizes to warriors who had

pleased the king, or to other tribes to secure peace.

But these women refused to marry men they did not love and who were often a lot older than them.

Their defiance of the king cost them their lives but changed the course of history.

KwaZulu-Natal Premier Sbu Ndebele has been focusing on African women who have helped the cause of their own freedom in his Women's Month speeches.

He told the audience at The Playhouse that today's women could learn lessons of strength from the

Ingcugce, who were courageous beyond their years.

Ndebele touched on the efforts the provincial government has made to protect women's rights.

Equality

He noted that the number of positions held in the KwaZulu-Natal government by women had increased and would continue to increase until there was equality.

On men who felt threatened by women in the workplace, Ndebele said:

"The liberation of women has liberated men."

He also spoke out strongly against conservative men in Umlazi's T section who recently stripped a woman naked on the streets because she was wearing trousers.

"Whose business is it what a woman chooses to wear, it is her right," said Ndebele.

He said women should never give up the fight for their rights and empowerment.

Dr Albertina Luthuli, daughter of the late ANC president, Albert Luthuli, sketched the history of the Ingcugce.

She told the audience that women continued to suffer from political, economic and sexual injustices.

Luthuli called on women to make use of the laws now in place to make their lives easier and to practise their rights without fear.

She made a personal plea to all women to do one thing: To save the life of one teenage girl who could be the victim of HIV, violence or teenage pregnancy.

Nokulunga Nzama, who was among the audience, said she had learned to celebrate and to take joy in being a woman of Africa.