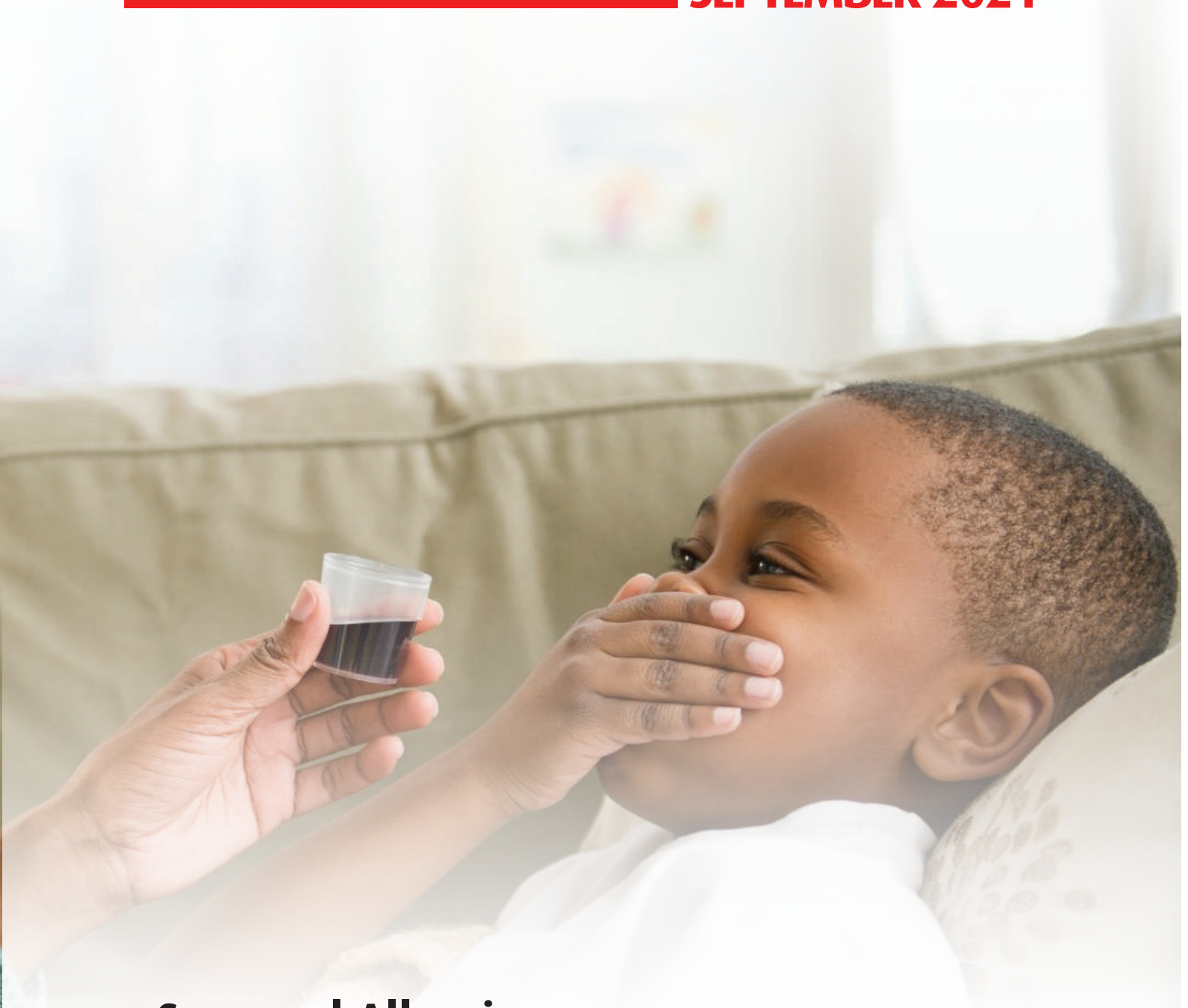


FIRST MUTUAL HEALTH Wellness

SEPTEMBER 2021



- **Seasonal Allergies.**
- **Oral Health.**
- **Suicide Prevention.**
- **Nutrition Tips.**



Seasonal Allergies

As we navigate the year in this COVID-19 pandemic, we hope that you and those around you are and remain safe. With the winter season behind us and getting into summer, we trust that the ailments associated with the cold season will start declining and we enjoy our nice sunny Zimbabwean weather! However, a change in weather affects a number of people with all sorts of allergies and as your health insurer of choice, we unpack this interesting development which most people might not be aware of.

For starters, most people think they are having an allergic reaction when they experience allergy-like symptoms such as nasal congestion, runny nose, sneezing, and in some cases, headaches. However, sometimes those symptoms are not an allergic reaction to something, but a sensitivity reaction to the weather. Changes in the weather, such as temperature changes, and even the change of seasons, can produce allergy-like symptoms including headaches, migraines, tiredness, disorientation and body pain.

Am I Allergic to The Weather?

You might have noticed that when the weather suddenly changes, going from a cold day to a hot day, you get congested or perhaps develop a headache or migraine or other body pain. If you have seasonal allergies you already know that each season brings specific allergens that can trigger symptoms, like sneezing, runny noses, and wheezing. Certain allergens thrive in certain weather conditions. For example, hay fever is common in the spring and summer seasons.

Interestingly enough, the nature of weather within seasons can also affect how bad your allergic reactions will be. For example, winter enable trees and plants to produce more pollen, which then make pollen allergies in the spring and summer worse. Studies show that global warming and climate change are adversely affecting allergy and asthma

levels. The dangerous combination of ozone pollution with rising pollen spore counts are also major sources for the dramatic increase in the number of allergy and asthma sufferers.

However, sometimes it is just the weather itself that gives us allergy-like symptoms. Changes in temperature and humidity can cause swelling within the sinus membranes of the nose and head, which in turn triggers sinus symptoms. These types of sinus symptoms are generally referred to as non-allergic rhinitis. In other words, you may not be having a true allergic reaction, even though it feels like one. So no, you are not really allergic to the weather; you have just developed a sensitivity to the changes the weather produces in your body.

Understanding How Weather Can Affect Our Body

Why do changes in temperature, pressure, or other weather conditions, cause allergy symptoms and/or pain in some people? The answer is due to inflammation in various body tissues affected by changes in weather.

How do you treat weather change allergies?

- Try an over-the-counter remedy
- Oral antihistamines. Antihistamines can help relieve sneezing, itching, a runny nose and watery eyes.
- Decongestants. Oral decongestants such as pseudoephedrine (Sudafed, Afrinol, others) can provide temporary relief from nasal stuffiness. ...
- Nasal spray.
- Combination medications.

If you have bad seasonal allergies, your doctor may recommend that you have skin tests or blood tests to find out exactly what allergens trigger your symptoms. Testing can help determine what steps you need to take to avoid your specific triggers and identify which treatments are likely to work best for you.

Source: [healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com)

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bring you success and joy!
Happy September!

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Basics of Oral Health

The advent of COVID-19 has seen us having to wear face masks basically all the time but that does not mean we should neglect the basics of oral health and looking after our teeth. Oral health affects our ability to eat, speak, smile, and show emotions. Oral health also affects a person's self-esteem, school performance, and attendance at work or school. Oral diseases range from cavities and gum disease, severe tooth loss to oral cancer. Regular preventive dental care is essential for good oral health so one can find problems earlier when they are easier to treat.

Oral Health Conditions

• Cavities (Tooth Decay)

Cavities are caused by a breakdown of the tooth enamel by acids produced by bacteria located in plaque that collects on teeth, especially along the gumline and in the crevices on the chewing surfaces of the teeth. Eating and drinking foods high in carbohydrates cause this bacteria to produce the acids that can cause the outer coating of the tooth (enamel) or root surface to break down.

• Gum (Periodontal) Disease

Gum disease is mainly the result of infections and inflammation of the gums and bone that surround and support the teeth. Certain chronic conditions increase one's risk for periodontal disease including diabetes, a weakened immune system, poor oral hygiene, and heredity. Tobacco use is also an important risk factor for gum disease. If early forms of periodontal diseases are not treated, the bone that supports the teeth can be lost, and the gums can become infected. Teeth with little bone support can become loose and may eventually have to be extracted.

• Oral Cancer

Preventing high risk behaviours, that include cigarette, cigar or pipe smoking, use of smokeless tobacco, and excessive use of alcohol are critical in preventing oral cancers. Early detection is key to increasing the survival rate for these cancers. Oral Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), the most common sexually transmitted disease, can cause cancers in the back of the throat, called "oropharyngeal cancers."

You can keep your teeth for your lifetime. Here are some things you can do to maintain a healthy mouth and strong teeth.

- Drink lots of water and brush with fluoride toothpaste and below is the recommended toothbrush care:
 - Do not share toothbrushes. Toothbrushes can have germs on them even after rinsing that could raise the risk of infection, especially for people with immune suppression.
 - After brushing, rinse your toothbrush with tap water until it is completely clean, let it air-dry, and store it in an upright position. If more than one brush is stored in the same holder, do not let them touch each other.
 - You do not need to soak toothbrushes in disinfecting solutions or mouthwash, which may actually spread germs under the right conditions.
 - Avoid covering toothbrushes or storing them in closed containers, which can cause the growth of bacteria.
 - Replace your toothbrush every 3 to 4 months, or sooner if the bristles look worn out. This is because a worn-out toothbrush may not work as well, not because it might carry more germs.
- Practice good oral hygiene. Brush teeth thoroughly twice a day and floss daily between the teeth to remove dental plaque.
- Visit your dentist at least once a year, even if you have no natural teeth or have dentures.
- Avoid the use of any tobacco products as these tend to taint your teeth with time.
- Limit alcoholic drinks.
- If you have diabetes, work to maintain control of the disease. This will decrease risk for other complications, including gum disease. Treating gum disease may help lower your blood sugar level.
- If your medication causes dry mouth, ask your doctor for a different medication that may not cause this condition. See your doctor or a dentist if you have sudden changes in taste and smell.

Source: **Centres for Disease Control (CDC)**

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Suicide Prevention



According to the World Health Organisation, 700,000 deaths in the world are caused by suicide and this has a ripple effect on family, friends and communities. Furthermore, for each suicide, there are more than 20 suicide attempts. Every 10th day of September, organisations and communities raise awareness of the scale of suicide around the world and the roles everyone can play to reduce the number of suicides induced deaths. The month of September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, a period of raising awareness pertaining to this stigmatised topic. It is also a time to spread hope, suicide prevention and sharing of pertinent information to people contemplating suicide as well as friends and families affected by a suicide death. It is the responsibility of us all to prevent suicide. United, we can all work to reduce shame, stigma and silence and help suicide rates fall. This year's theme is **'Creating hope through action'** whose main focus is to explore the complicated idea of 'hope' in suicide prevention.

Common Suicide Myths

Those experiencing severe symptoms of suicidal behavior are typically facing such deep despair that they simply see no other option than to end their suffering. For most, the goal is not to die but to eliminate the pain of their current circumstances. The following are some of the myths that are associated with suicide:

- A person only attempts suicide to get attention.
- People who talk about suicide don't really follow through with it.
- Talking about suicide may influence someone to do it.
- If a person was previously suicidal and appears to feel better, they are no longer at risk.
- Once a person has decided to end their life, nothing will change their mind.

Causes

There are so many factors that lead to suicide and no single approach works for everyone attempting suicide. What is important to each and every one of us, and failure to achieving it can contribute to suicidal thoughts. In some instances, people commit suicide because their feelings, needs and aspirations are being

misunderstood. However, there are certain factors and life events that may make someone more vulnerable to suicide and mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression can also be a contributing factor. People who chose to commit suicide often feel trapped, burdened and powerless towards situations and events occurring in their lives. Situations including chronic illness, job loss, relationship problems, bullying have been key triggers of suicide in communities. Being in a position of loneliness causes people to think they have no other options and feel like suicide is the only option that they have. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has increased people's feelings of isolation, loneliness and vulnerability. Feelings of loneliness and isolation can increase one's desire to commit suicide.

Adolescents and teenagers tend to commit suicide because of abuse of any kind or bullying at home or at school. Teenagers face pressures to succeed and fit in. They may struggle with self-esteem issues, self-doubt, and feelings of alienation. For some, this leads to suicide. A hostile social or school environment can also lead to suicide if the child feels like no one is there for them and they feel invisible.

Warning Signs of Suicide

Most suicidal individuals usually display warning signs and intentions before they eventually take their life. Recognising that a family member or friend is suicidal is the first act of assisting them. The following are some of the warning signs:

- Talking about harming oneself or others
- Talking about death and securing items to be used in a suicide attempt
- Hopelessness – talking about unbearable feelings, bleak future, not looking forward to the future.
- Mood disorders and erratic mood swings – depression, bipolar, anxiety, self-hatred, and change in sleep patterns.
- Alcoholic dependence, abuse and taking risky behavior as if they have a death wish
- Previous attempted suicide
- Family history of suicide
- Losing interest in day-to-day activities, neglect of responsibilities, withdrawing from others

Prevention

Suicide prevention is certainly not a one size fits all. This is due to the different factors that can lead to suicide. Suicide prevention starts with recognising warning signs and acting on them. Noticing that a family member or friend is. However, the following

ways can be adopted and used to help individuals contemplating suicide thoughts:

- We need to remove the stigma that surrounds suicide. Everyone has a role to play, no matter how small. Family, communities and organisations have to promote hope, create a more compassionate environment that cultivates opening up when people feel overwhelmed with life's ups and downs.
- In most instances, people commit suicide because they have lost hope. It is important for the community to create hope by availing alternatives to suicide. We need to inspire confidence in all of us, no matter how big or small, it may provide a glimmer of hope to those who are struggling. Hope plays a key and vital role during some one's darkest moments

Stories and experiences of people who have attempted suicide or lost someone to suicide can be powerful and helpful to the community and people contemplating suicide. Sharing such stories can help encourage people to reach out to someone for support and knowing that it is safe for them to share their feelings and thoughts without being ridiculed, belittled and mocked.

It is also important to be gentle with others in order to avoid people feeling inadequate, vulnerable and inferior. Create lines of communication in a space that is comfortable. Showing a suicidal person that people care, can help prevent suicide. Remove any items that might be used to commit suicide.

Talking to a Suicidal Person

It is important not to be confrontational when talking to a person contemplating suicide as this might increase a person's desire to commit suicide. One can:

- Listen more than you talk. But do not argue.
- Be sympathetic and not judgmental
- Promise confidentiality and swear to secrecy
- Get them professional help and support.
- Make regular follow ups that are not persistent in nature. Stay in touch as support is vital in recovery.

Reference
www.helpguide.org

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Nutrition Tips for summer

Summer is all about fun in the sun - and it's also a good time to change your diet! The foods you eat in the winter aren't necessarily the foods you should eat in the summer. Let's talk about the best foods for summertime and how to choose foods that are both high-quality and affordable.

In the summer heat, lighter foods are best. Using a base of whole grains and adding plenty of vegetables boosts the nutritional value of your meals. Vegetables and fruits that are in season can be higher quality than those that are out of season. In-season fruits and vegetables usually cost less, too!

Here's a look at healthy summer fruits you won't want to miss this season:

Water Melon

Is there anything sweeter in summer than taking a bite of cold melon? Watermelon is a sweet and refreshing low calorie summer snack. It provides hydration and also essential nutrients, including vitamins.

Apples

An apple a day keeps the doctor away!! Apples are a good source of fibre and vitamin C. They also contain polyphenol (compounds that we get through certain plant-based foods) which may have numerous health benefits.

Plums

Plums contain polyphenol antioxidants, which have positive effects on bone health. These antioxidants may also help reduce the risk of heart

disease and diabetes. A single plum provides a small trace of B vitamins, phosphorus, and magnesium

Strawberries

Other than being super hydrating, this sweet, red berry is good for your overall health. Eating strawberries is associated with a reduced risk of many chronic diseases and cancers.

Oranges

Besides providing the much needed Vitamin C, oranges help your body make collagen, a protein that heals wounds and gives you smoother skin.

It's important to avoid letting good nutrition take a back seat during our busy and inconsistent summer schedules. Taking the time to make sure we eat consistent, healthy, nutritious meals will keep us feeling our best while we're on the go.

Source: *HSS Nutrition*



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To help minimise possible exposure to COVID-19 we encourage you to make use of our digital channels for queries and payments as listed below:

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Bank: STANDARD CHARTERED
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Branch: AFRICA UNITY SQUARE
Account Number: 0100206784000

Bank: FIRST CAPITAL BANK
Account name: FIRST MUTUAL HEALTH COMPANY
Branch: FCDA CENTRE (2157)
Account Number: 1031434 Queries and Authorisations

Our contact centre will be available 7 days a week from 8am to 7pm. The contact center numbers are: 08677007432 and 0242 251 440

Claims Quotations

Claims quotations for authorisation may be emailed to: claims1@firstmutualhealth.co.zw
Every effort will be made to respond to the emails within an hour.

Contribution Payments

The proof of payment should be emailed to debtors@firstmutualhealth.co.zw

General Enquiries

Enquiries may also be sent to info@firstmutualhealth.co.zw



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