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Impala Platinum making a difference HEALTHY LIFESTYLES FOR HEALTHY LIVES

The health strategy at Impala Rustenburg addresses both occupational (or work-related) health, and non-occupational (non-work related) health.

Rustenburg - Welcome back to our series of articles about Impala Rustenburg where we showcase how our people and our business make a difference – every day.

The health and wellness of Impala Rustenburg employees, their families and the communities around Rustenburg is very important to us. Healthy people are happier people.

As such our health strategy at Impala Rustenburg addresses both occupational (or work-related) health, and non-occupational (non-work related) health. Our strategy is focused on preventing harm to our employees. We structure our approach around three main pillars: Education; Wellness; and Treatment.

Lifestyle diseases can affect all of us. The biggest culprits are diabetes, HIV, high blood pressure – which is also called hypertension. One of the keys to living a longer, healthier and happier life is to prevent and manage these lifestyle diseases.

Hypertension, diabetes and heart disease often go hand-in-hand. High blood pressure is a major factor in heart disease. So, keeping your blood pressure under control goes a long way to preventing heart problems like heart attacks and heart failure and preventing strokes. You can do this by maintaining a healthy weight, eating a balanced diet, avoiding salt and partaking in regular exercise. It is also very important to avoid smoking and limit alcohol consumption. Even though drinking is so widespread and alcohol brands spend millions on advertising each month encouraging us to buy beer, wine or spirits, excess alcohol consumption leads to many physical, psychological and social problems including a direct effect on your heart.

Having diabetes can also be an added complication for the health of your heart – so a healthy diet, with no sugar or refined carbohydrates is essential to the health of diabetics. Some of the early signs of hypertension to look out for are headaches, dizziness, swelling of your lower legs and nose bleeds. For diabetes one should look out for severe thirst, frequent urination and tiredness.

If you have any of these symptoms it is important to get tested for diabetes and hypertension, and if you have them, to keep them under control with the advice given above and take your treatment regularly.

Infection with HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) is also a major lifestyle disease. Impala has for many years been running programmes with the Department of Health and other mining companies on the dangers of being infected with HIV. Everyone should know by now that unprotected sex with a partner whose HIV status is not known puts you at risk of contracting HIV. You can also contract HIV through blood contamination and intravenous drug use.

Symptoms of HIV could be weight loss, recurrent infections, flu like symptoms and continuous diarrhoea but even in the absence of these it is important that everyone gets tested and knows their status.

Impala has extended its shared responsibility for the health of its employees to include their dependants, as well as the broader community by investing in community healthcare projects. We also focus on identifying and managing patients with chronic conditions.

An integrated approach to managing TB and HIV

The main health risks facing our Impala employees are pulmonary TB and the associated human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) co-infection, both of which are of epidemic proportions in Southern Africa.

At Impala Rustenburg we take an integrated approach to managing TB and HIV – precisely because of the co-infection rate. Our programmes have been very successful and the number of new cases of pulmonary TB diagnosed for employees decreased by 26% year-on-year, during our 2019 financial year.

At our South African operations, the annualised incidence rate of 337 per 100,000 employees remains well below the estimated South African average of 567 per 100,000 citizens and we remain on track to achieve the 2,024 mining milestones for TB which is for all mining companies to have TB (new cases) at or below the national rate. Impala has already achieved this milestone target but we still need to do better.

All patients diagnosed HIV positive undergo extensive counselling by a multidisciplinary medical team consisting of nurses, doctors, social workers and peer educators in order for them to accept their status and, most importantly, to start and be compliant with ART treatment.

We are pleased that adherence to treatment for HIV and TB remains good with the last two years at 95% and 100% respectively. This is because failure to strictly adhere treatment will allow the TB bacteria and the HIV virus to become resistant to the treatment, which will no longer be effective and this will result in death.

Our elected health and safety representatives play an important role in assisting and advising management on health and safety issues and on challenges facing our teams.

Mental wellbeing is also another absolutely essential part of living a balanced life. In South Africa not enough attention is paid to our mental wellness. At Impala Rustenburg, to promote emotional wellbeing, and to support our employees with early symptoms and signs of emotional stress, all operations facilitate access to professional psychological and social support through the Careways Employee Assistance Programme.

All employees have access to the assistance programme and to various other resources aimed at encouraging wellbeing. Mental health challenges are often related to financial difficulties. We therefore also focus on assisting employees who are over-indebted.

Employee over-indebtedness is a huge concern in the mining industry and continues to affect many of our employees across our operations. Over the past five years, we have implemented various initiatives aimed at assisting employees with financial literacy, planning and mitigating debt.

We measure the impact of these initiatives through our payroll office by measuring the number and value of garnishee, maintenance and administration orders instituted against our employees. Employee indebtedness and the risk of debt is also included in our induction process for new employees and reinduction of employees returning from long-term leave.

The impact of our financial wellbeing initiatives can be clearly seen at Impala Rustenburg where we have seen substantial decreases in garnishee, administration and maintenance orders from their peak in October 2014 to June 2019. Through our programmes we have managed to reduce garnishee orders by 90%, reduce administration orders by 29% and we have seen a 10% drop maintenance orders.

Despite the improved debt position of our employees, we continue to work with our principal union to identify further employees who need debt counselling and intensify efforts to encourage more employees to use our financial wellbeing services.

Our mental health support programme also has a special focus on the management of drug and alcohol-related issues. By focusing on these initiatives, we hope to see fewer incidents of domestic violence, fewer incidents of breathalyser alcohol positive readings, and a positive impact on the employees who embark on therapy.

Look out for further updates in forthcoming publications and remember to tune in to Radio Mafisa FM 93.4 on Fridays at 18.10pm to find out how Impala Platinum truly does make a difference.