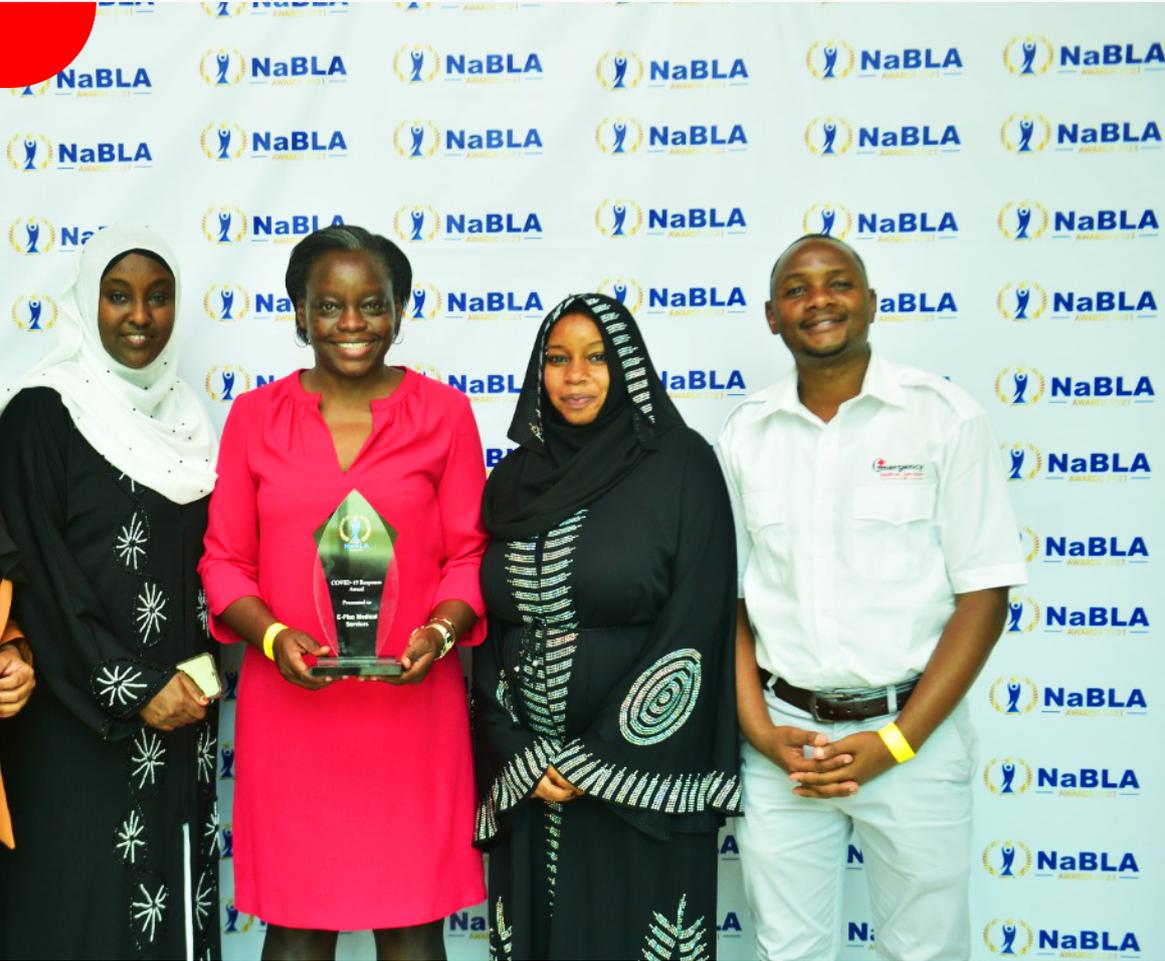




NOVEMBER, 2021



VERSITY  
HUB  
AFRICA



## E-Plus Scoops Top Covid-19 Award



By Felix Musila (Communications and PR Officer)

In recognition of its outstanding work on Covid-19, E-Plus was recently awarded the Most Valuable Covid-19 Response in the just concluded 2021 National Business Leadership Awards (NaBLA). The awards gala, in its second edition now was held on the 26th November, 2021 in Nairobi.....[Continue on Pg 1](#)

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## Our Mission

We work with our communities and partners to respond to medical and trauma emergencies through the provision of accessible, responsive and quality...pre-hospital care to save lives. Our patients will receive prompt and appropriate emergency medical pre-hospital care from properly trained and certified professionals.

## Our Vision

A regionally recognised leader for responsive, superior-quality emergency medical and trauma response services.

## Our Core Values (iSPIE)

**Innovation:** E-Plus continues to pursue new ways to improve its' service offering in a socially responsive manner in order to create transformative changes in patient experience.

**Sustainability:** E-Plus provides its services while ensuring long-term financial and social positive outcomes.

**Professional Excellence:** E-Plus provides the highest level of compassionate services at all times. It demonstrates quality and ethical behavior in its work and acts in the best interests of the people its serves. Treating people with dignity and consideration.

**Integrity:** E-Plus is honest and reliable. Its actions and decisions are guided by its professionalism, transparency and respect for others. E-Plus is accountable to the people it serves, the community and each other and to its authorities.

**Empathy:** E-Plus actively seeks to understand how patients, family members, caregivers and its own staff experience the emergencies they respond to, taking into account the emotions they go through and using this knowledge to improve their well being and its service delivery.



From Left to Right; Qitma Noor (Social Media and Marketing Assistant), Rukia Abdulkadir (Quality Management Representative), Susan Ng'ong'a (E-Plus Managing Director), Zainab Athman (Customer Care Assistant) and Felix Musila (Public Relations and Communications Officer)

## E-Plus Scoops Top Covid-19 Award



**By Felix Musila (Communications and PR Officer)**

In recognition of its outstanding work on Covid-19, E-Plus was recently awarded the Most Valuable Covid-19 Response in the just concluded 2021 National Business Leadership Awards (NaBLA). The awards gala, in its second edition now was held on the 26th November, 2021 in Nairobi.

This award recognizes the best corporate solutions and the organization that has showcased valuable information from Human Resource departments that the wellbeing of the employees, customers, and communities involved was exemplary during the COVID period and also showcase innovation and redesign of the workplace to increase productivity and encourage effective communication.

**With over 5,283 Covid-19 evacuations so far, we remain the only Emergency Medical Services Provider with the highest number of Covid-19 evacuations in East and Central Africa.**

From the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have undertaken numerous structured interventions in terms of dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Some of the measures include:

- ✓ Sharing experiences and addressing challenges through peer to peer discussions and Continuous Medical Education
- ✓ Equipping the staff with the proper PPEs and continuous training on donning and doffing procedures
- ✓ Maximum reduction of risk to personnel by practicing high level Infection Prevention and Control measures and strict monitoring to ensure compliance
- ✓ Daily debrief and Psychosocial support to the Staff and prompt response to emerging issues.
- ✓ Participating in webinars and finding relevant fact-based training for our staff to equip them with adequate information on Covid-19
- ✓ Working closely with MOH to evacuate confirmed cases, contact tracing and movement of identified contacts to quarantine areas
- ✓ Support screening in some counties and participate in sensitization and awareness creation in the community
- ✓ Aid rapid response teams in sample transfers to laboratories for testing
- ✓ Paramedics trained on critical care participated in joint training to support health care workers on case management in critical care unit
- ✓ Real time data capture and sharing of national trend monitoring



*The Award Certificate and Plaque*



*From Left to Right; Felix Musila (Communications and Public Relations Officer) (left) and Rukia Abdulkadir (right) pose with the award*

We sincerely say thank you to everyone for believing and voting for us and we do pledge to continue providing quality and professional advanced pre-hospital medical care and ambulance services in Kenya and beyond.

# Familiarization Visits



By Felix Musila (Communications and PR Officer)

## Visit by our Tanzania Business Partners

We were privileged to host high level prospective business partners from the Republic of Tanzania who paid E-Plus a visit in order to learn more about our operations. They toured our Dispatch Centre, ambulance and later listened to presentations about E-Plus from the entire management team.



E-Plus Managing Director, Susan Ng'ong'a (left) poses with the partners from Tanzania

## Visit by the Red Crescents of Ethiopia, Sudan, Djibouti, Nigeria, Somalia and Kenya

A delegation from the senior leadership of Ethiopia Red Cross, Sudan Red Crescent, Djibouti Red Crescent, Kenya Red Cross, Somalia Red Crescent, and Nigeria Red Cross, visited E-Plus.

They held discussions with our Managing Director, Susan Ng'ong'a on mutual areas of collaboration besides also being taken on a brief tour of the E-Plus facilities including the state of the art Dispatch Centre as well as our Advanced Life Support and Basic Life Support ambulances.



E-Plus Managing Director, Susan Ng'ong'a (in grey dress) and Dr. Christine Memusi (in grey sweater) explain to the guests how an ambulance stretcher is used

## Visit by Officials from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Africa Office

On 10th November, 2021 we were pleased to host a delegation from The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) Africa Office.

The officials were on a familiarization tour of our facilities including the state of the art Dispatch Centre and ambulances (Advanced Life Support and Basic Life Support).



E-Plus Management team pose for a photo with the officials from the IFRC



The officials during a tour of one of our ambulances

# Business Development Corner



*By Florence Kariuki (Business Development Manager)*

A delegation from E-Plus recently held a consultative meeting with the Kisumu Muslim Association in Kisumu town on the 7th November 2021. The team was led by E-Plus Managing Director, Susan Ng'ong'a, Florence Kariuki, Business Development Manager, Obadiah Salim, Dispatch Supervisor and Felix Musila, Communications and Public Relations Officer.

The main aim of the forum was to deliberate on providing Emergency Medical Services to the Muslim community within Kisumu County.



*A cross section of the participants following the discussions at the forum*



*E-Plus Managing Director, Susan Ng'ong'a making her presentation at the forum*



*The Kisumu team of Paramedics and Operators pose for a picture*

# E-Plus Boma Clinic Diabetes Awareness Day



*By Felix Musila (Communications and PR Officer)*

In commemoration of the World Diabetes Day on the 14th November, 2021 the E-Plus Boma Clinic organized for FREE SCREENING for all the staff of E-Plus, Switch TV, Boma Hotel and the Kenya Red Cross Society on 12th November, 2021.

The screening was conducted at a mobile clinic stationed next to the Kenya Red Cross Society Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) from 10am till 5pm.

Services on offer included:

- ✓ Health Talk
- ✓ Blood sugar check
- ✓ BMI
- ✓ Nutritional/wellness counselling

A health and wellness talk by qualified nutritionists was also be conducted as part of the activities on that day.



*Staff Undergoing Check-up During the Awareness Clinic*





## Road Safety and Fleet Management Training



By Felix Musila (Communications and PR Officer)

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC), E-Plus and Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS) organized a driver training in Narok County, Kenya as part of the IFRC strategic plan on promotion of the Road Safety and Fleet Management. The training that was covered in two phases was conducted from the 14th - 27th November 2021.

IFRC invited a total of 3 IFRC Driver trainers to facilitate the training which was hosted by KRCS. KRCS also provided 8 diverse topic facilitators to make the training all round. KRCS has a big fleet (KRCS owned) and are also using the Vehicle Rental Programme (VRP). The fleet Varies in terms of vehicles, but majority are the standard IFRC Land cruisers.

The training specifically aimed to support and train drivers on topics such as Road Safety, ECO driving and Off-road driving. KRCS provided tools, training material and vehicles for this training.

E-Plus facilitated a total of 50 ambulance operators for the training.

The drivers / operators were drawn from the listed organizations working with / together with KRCS in their Kenya operations:

- ✓ Kenya Red Cross Society
- ✓ E-Plus Emergency Medical Services
- ✓ Narok County Referral Hospital
- ✓ Narok County Government Offices



Left: Salac Agali (IFRC, Global Fleet Lead) Right: Ramadhan Ali, Ambulance Operator



An ambulance maneuvering during a stability and control test



## What They are Saying About Us



SOS from my mum in the village(Siaya)at 1pm. She's home alone and needed to rush to the hospital. I was panicking from Kampala then I remembered I have a family cover from [@EMS\\_Kenya](#).

It is now 13:37pm EAT and this team had managed to locate our home. The best 60\$ I have ever spent!! Thank you so much [@EMS\\_Kenya](#) for taking care of my mum while I was so far away!! **Thank you thank you thank you**. And for the calm way all the responders handled me and my panic...

### Switch TV Kenya



We would like to congratulate [@EMS\\_Kenya](#) for winning the **MOST VALUABLE COVID -19 RESPONSE AWARD** in the National Business Leadership Awards 2021! We are proud of you, keep winning! #NaBLAAwards2021 #Winning #Covid19ke

### George Morwani



Congratulations to E-PLUS starting with the managing director Mrs Susan ng'ong'a and the team as a whole. Keep on the good service to the you are doing.

### Martin Pritt



Congratulations are in order, this is the Lord's doing and it's marvelous to our eyes.

### Titus Kisangau



I am proud of the great work that [@EMS\\_Kenya](#) has continued to do in the emergency medical services space. This award is a clear validation from the public. Well done [@SusanNgonga](#) and the team. Keep saving lives!

### Jeremiah



E-Plus is very quick in responding and staff are welcoming and friendly and are ready to serve their clients. They are very much caring. Especially in Watamu.

### Omamo



I was so impressed with the response despite the fact that I was very far from the hospital. My patient reached to the health care facility in good condition and time.

# Bouncing Back



By Mark Njeru (Quality Management Coordinator)



**B**ouncing back is described as returning to a normal condition after a difficult situation, the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems or workplace or financial stressors.

Secrets that helps to bounce back namely:

## Make Connections

Good relationships with close family members, friends or others are important. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you strengthens bouncing back. Some people find that being active in civic groups, faith-based organizations, or other local groups provides social support and can help with reclaiming hope. Assisting others in their time of need also can benefit the helper.

## Avoid Seeing Crises as Insurmountable Problems

You can't change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events. Try looking beyond the present to how future circumstances may be a little better.

## Accept that Change is a Part of Living

Certain goals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.

## Move Towards your Goals

Develop some realistic goals. Do something regularly — even if it seems like a small accomplishment — that enables you to move toward your goals. Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, “What's one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?”

## Take Decisive Actions

Act on adverse situations as much as you can. Take decisive actions, rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away.

## Look for Opportunities for Self-Discovery

People often learn something about themselves and may find that they have grown in some respect as a result of their struggle with loss. Many people who have experienced tragedies and hardship have reported better relationships, greater sense of strength even while feeling vulnerable, increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality and heightened appreciation for life.

## Nurture a Positive View of Yourself

Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience.

## Keep Things in Perspective

Even when facing very painful events, try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Avoid blowing the event out of proportion.

## Maintain a Hopeful Outlook

An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life. Try visualizing what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear.

## Take care of yourself

Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly. Taking care of yourself helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require bouncing back.

# Coping with Grief and Loss



By Margaret Moraa (Customer Complaints Assistant)

Regardless to the type of loss you've suffered, there's no wrong or right way to grieve. Understanding the stages and types of grief, on the other hand, can help you cope with your grieving process in a healthier way.

## So, What is Grief?

Grief is a normal reaction to loss. It's the emotional pain you experience when something or someone you care about is taken away from you. Losses can be extremely overwhelming at times leading to a wide range of uncomfortable and unexpected emotions from shock or rage to disbelief, remorse and deep sadness being experienced.

Grief can have a negative impact on your physical health, making it difficult to sleep, eat, or even think clearly. These are normal reactions to loss, and the greater the loss, the more severe your grieving.

Whatever your loss, it's unique and personal to you, so don't be ashamed of how you're feeling or believe that grieving for certain things is only appropriate for certain people. It's natural to be sad at the loss of a person, an animal, a relationship, or a situation that meant a lot to you.

Regardless of the reason of your grieving, there are healthy strategies to cope with the suffering that, over time, can help you come to terms with your loss, find new meaning, and eventually move on with your life.



People comforting one another

## The Grieving Process

While grieving is an inevitable part of life, there are strategies to cope with the agony, come to terms with your grief, and finally pick up the pieces and move on.

- ✓ Acknowledge your pain
- ✓ Recognize that grief can evoke a wide range of unexpected emotions and reactions
- ✓ Recognize that your grief will be unique to you
- ✓ Seek out help from people who care about you in person
- ✓ Take care of yourself physically to support your mental well-being
- ✓ Understand the difference between grief and depression

## Symptoms of Grief

While loss affects people in different ways, many of us experience the following symptoms when we're grieving. Just remember that almost anything that you experience in the early stages of grief is normal—including feeling like you're going crazy, feeling like you're in a bad dream, or questioning your religious or spir-

itual beliefs.

Emotional symptoms of grief include: shock and disbelief, sadness, guilt, fear and anger.

We often think of grief as a strictly emotional process, but grief often involves physical problems, including: fatigue, nausea, lowered immunity, weight loss/gain, aches and pains and insomnia.

## Seeking Support for Grief and Loss

Grief can make you want to isolate yourself from people and retreat into your shell. However, having other people's face-to-face support is critical to recovery from loss. Even if you're not comfortable discussing your feelings in regular situations, it's critical to do so while you're mourning.

While talking about your loss with friends and family can help you cope with your grief, it doesn't mean you have to do it every time you engage with them. Being in the company of individuals who care about you can

also provide comfort. It's important not to isolate yourself.

Turn to your friends and family for help. Even if you pride yourself on being tough and self-sufficient, this is the time to lean on the people who care about you. Instead of avoiding them, reach near to your friends and loved ones, spend time with them face to face, and accept the help that is offered. People often want to assist but are unsure how, so tell them what you require—whether it's a shoulder to weep on, a listening ear, or simply someone to hang out with.

Accept that many people feel awkward while trying to console a mourning person. For many people, grief is a puzzling and sometimes terrifying sensation, especially if they haven't suffered a similar loss. They may be unsure of how to console you and say or do the wrong things as a result. However, don't let this be an excuse to withdraw into your shell and shun social interaction. It's because they care that a friend or loved one reaches out to you.

Take solace in your religion. If you follow a religious tradition, you can find comfort in its grieving rituals. Spiritual activities that you find significant, such as praying, meditating, or attending church, might provide comfort. Talk to a clergy member or others in your religious group if you're having doubts about your faith in the wake of the loss.

Join a support group. Grief can feel very lonely, even when you have loved ones around. Sharing your sorrow with others who have

experienced similar losses can help. To find a bereavement support group in your area, contact local hospitals, hospices, funeral homes, and counseling centers.

Talk to a therapist or a bereavement counselor. Find a mental health expert who has experience with grief therapy if your grief is too much to bear. A competent therapist can assist you in working through overwhelming emotions and overcoming grieving roadblocks.

Informing people about your loss and asking aid through social media might be beneficial. However, it may attract Internet trolls who make unpleasant, inappropriate, or even aggressive insults. To avoid extra pain and heartache, you may want to limit your social media use to closed groups rather than public postings that can be commented on by anybody at this time.

### Taking Care of Yourself as You Grieve

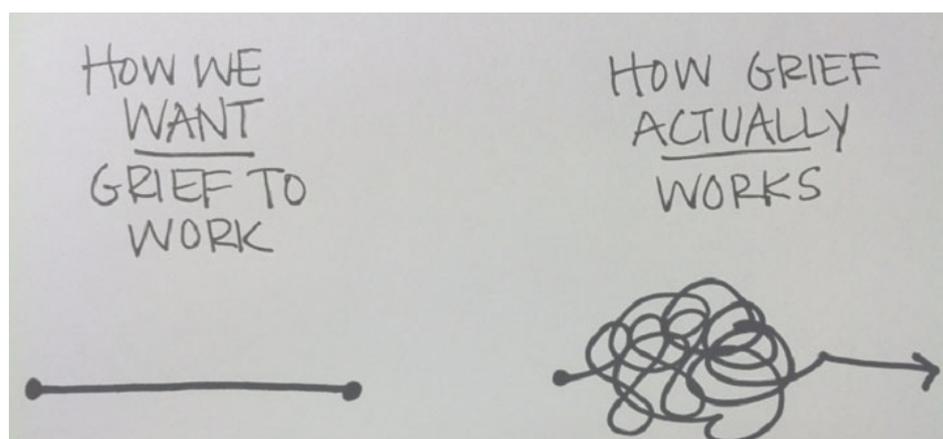
It's more vital than ever to look after yourself when you're mourning. The stress of a significant loss can exhaust your energy and emotional reserves quickly. Taking care of your phys-

ical and mental needs can aid you in overcoming this challenging situation.

- ✓ Face your feelings
- ✓ Expressed your feelings in a tangible or imaginative way
- ✓ Take care of your physical well-being
- ✓ Maintain your hobbies and interests as much as possible
- ✓ Allow no one to tell you how you should feel, and don't tell yourself how you should feel either
- ✓ Prepare for "triggers" in your grieving. Anniversaries, holidays, and significant celebrations can stir up painful memories and emotions

Grieving is a deeply personal experience that takes time to complete. Many factors influence how you grieve, including your personality and coping style, life experience, faith, and the significance of the loss. Healing takes time; it can't be forced or rushed, and there's no such thing as a "normal" grieving schedule.

The grieving process can take years for some people while for others weeks or months can suffice. Whatever stage of grieving you're in, it's important to be patient with yourself and let the process unfold naturally.



# The Holidays and COVID-19: How to Stay Safe



By *Gitma Noor (Communications and Marketing Assistant)*



*A family during the holidays*

**Y**ou may be returning home for the holidays. But, before you do that, there are several safety precautions that you should follow, according to health professionals. Remember, we're currently in the midst of a pandemic, with only 4.5 percent of Kenyans fully immunized against COVID-19.

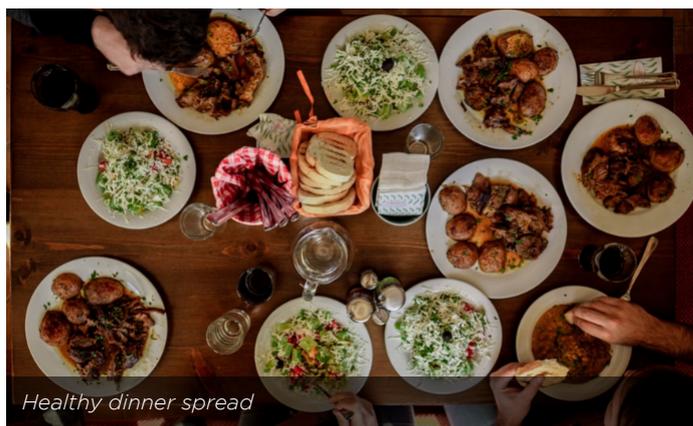
All of this could make holiday preparations difficult.

Here are ways to brighten your holidays by making your health and safety a priority.

- Wash your hands often to help prevent the spread of germs. The flu season is here therefore, for at least 20 seconds, wash your hands with soap and clean running water.
- Get vaccinated! Vaccinations aid in the prevention of diseases and the saving of lives. Every year, everyone aged 6 months and up should get vaccinated against the flu and especially now, everyone eligible should get the COVID-19 vaccine.
- Stay dry and comfortable by bundling up. Wear light, warm layers, gloves, caps, scarves, and waterproof boots when going outside.
- Manage your stress. If you're feeling worried, overwhelmed, or out of control, take a break. Finding support, connecting socially, and getting plenty of sleep are all good methods to deal with stress.
- DO NOT drink and drive, or allow others to do so. When someone drives while inebriated, they endanger everyone else on the road. Make the decision not to drink and drive, and encourage every-

one else not to do so.

- Prepare food in a safe manner. Remember to wash your hands and surfaces frequently, avoid cross-contamination, prepare items to the right temperature, and refrigerate foods as soon as possible.
- Seat belts **MUST** be worn while driving or riding in a vehicle. Always use a child safety seat, booster seat, or seat belt that is appropriate for their height, weight, and age in the vehicle. No matter how short the travel, always buckle up and encourage passengers to do the same.
- ✓ Maintain a smoke-free environment. Smoking and secondhand smoke should be avoided. Although smokers face significant health hazards as a result of their tobacco usage, nonsmokers are also at danger when exposed to tobacco smoke.
- ✓ Tests and screenings should be done. Inquire with your doctor about the tests you require and when they should be completed. Make sure your personal and family history is up to date.
- ✓ Stay active and eat well. Consume fruits and vegetables, which are high in nutrients and can help reduce your risk of certain diseases. Limit your intake of high-fat, high-salt, and high-sugar foods.
- ✓ Also, be active for at least 2 and a half hours per week, and encourage children and teenagers to be active for at least 1 hour.



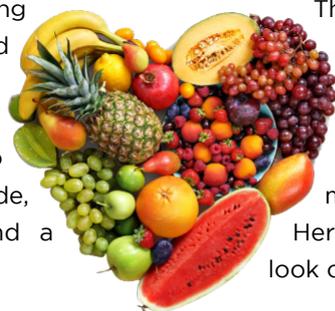
*Healthy dinner spread*

# Healthy Living



By **Zainab Athman** (Customer Care Assistant)

It's a common myth that getting fit is only about eating healthy and exercising. In reality, creating a healthy lifestyle and maintaining it isn't about just those two factors -it's also about being able to keep a positive attitude, strong mental health and a healthy self-image.



**Eat the rainbow:-** Pick brightly colored foods in the 'produce aisle'.

These are high in antioxidants (antioxidants remove free radicals in our body that damage our cells) and make a more appealing plate.

Here are a few examples to look out for:

- White (Bananas, Mushrooms)
- Yellow (Pineapples, Mangoes)
- Orange (Oranges, Papayas)
- Red (Apples, Strawberries, Tomatoes, Watermelon)
- Green (Guavas, Avocados, Cucumber, lettuce, Celery)
- Purple/ Blue (Blackberries, Eggplant, Prunes)

**Cut down on processed foods:-** Processed foods are simply not good for you. Most nutritional value is lost in the making of processed foods and added preservatives are bad for our health. These foods contain a high amount of salt, which leads to high blood pressure and heart diseases. In general, the more ingredients on the label, the more processed the item.

**Avoid negativity within yourself:-** You don't need negativity from yourself, either. Let go of all negative thoughts within yourself. Overeating tends to happen when one feels unhappy, so by staying in a positive state of mind, you cut out an unhealthy dependence on food to be happy.

**Avoid negative people in your life:-** A positive mentality is key for a healthy life. You don't need negativity in your life. If you feel that a person or friend is negative, just let him or her go.

**Avoid trigger foods:-** These are foods you can't put down after one bite, everyone's trigger foods are different, but typically they consist of candy bars, chocolates, chips, cookies or anything with high levels of refined sugar, salt, fat or flour.

**Take your time while eating:-** Your brain, not your stomach, is the organ responsible for feelings of hunger and fullness. If you take your time during meals and eat more slowly, you allow your brain adequate time to send the "full" message to your stomach and allow your food to be fully ingested. Don't rely on a clean plate to tell you when it's time to stop eating.

**Prepare your meals:-** When you prepare meals yourself, you control exactly what goes in to them. This make it easier for you to make the right healthy choices for your body.

**Move towards low calorie and low fat alternatives:-** There are mainly low-fat or non-fat alternatives readily available in all grocery stores. Try switching your full-fat pantry staples for low-fat versions over a period of time.

**Stop smoking:-** Smoking is bad, period. If you're a smoker, quit for better health- not just for yourself, but for your family and friends. If you don't smoke, stay that way.

**Have healthy snacks on hand:-** Eating small meals throughout the day is good for your metabolism, but eating the right things is what matters most. When turning to snacks during your day, look for things like fruits, salad or freshly squeezed juices not from concentrate. These are nutritional and won't give you a sugar crash

Although there is a ton of advice out there on how to achieve a healthy lifestyle, here are some of the key factors to keep in mind.

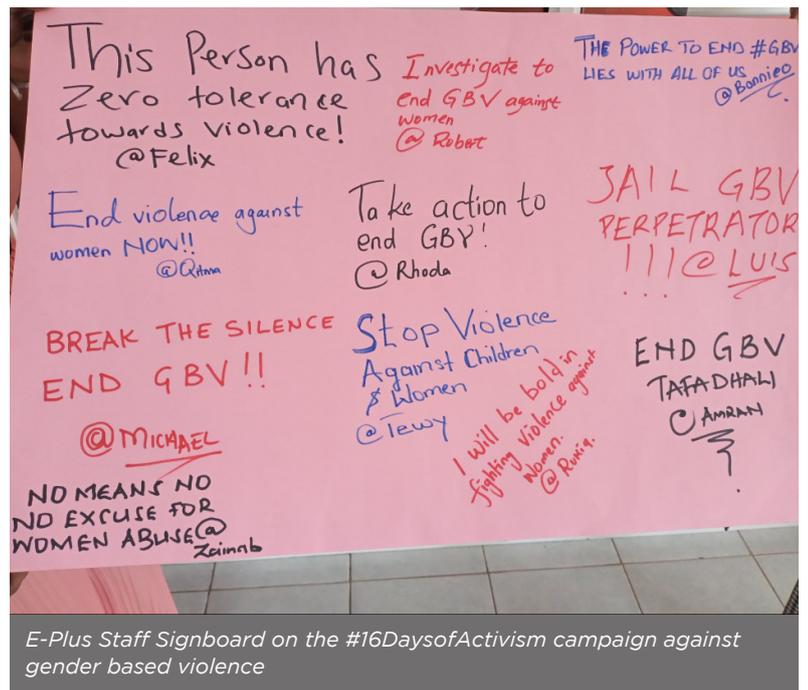
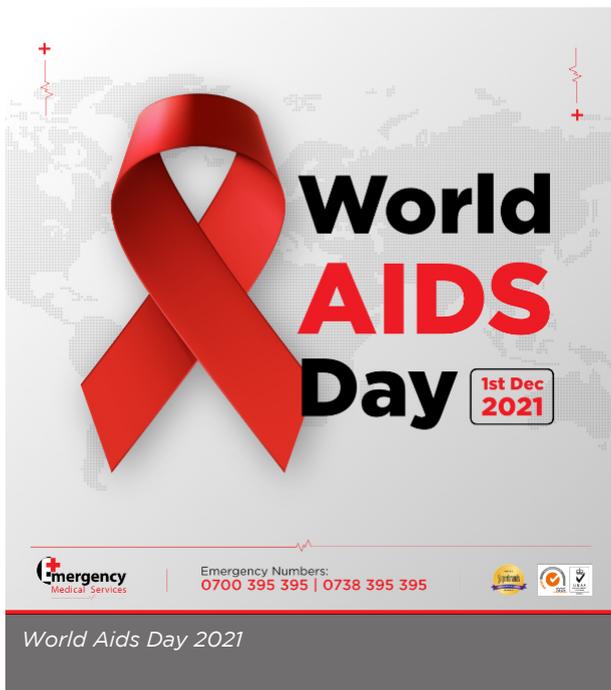
**Drinking water:-** Water is absolutely necessary for carrying out our bodily functions, removing waste, and transporting nutrients and oxygen throughout our bodies. Since water is expelled every day through urination, bowel movements, perspiration and breathing, we need to replenish the amount of water in our bodies constantly.

The amount of water we need depends on a variety of factors, but generally an adult needs about two to three litres of water a day. A good way to 'tell' if you're getting enough water is by your urine- which should be either colorless or pale yellow.

**Exercise:-** Not just a few times a week, but every day. By moving your body in some way for 30 minutes a day, you will lower your risk of diseases, create higher bone density and potentially increase your life span.

**Eat more fruits and vegetables:-** All fruits and vegetables carry vitamins and minerals, components essential to your health. It's suggested that we consume 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

# Pictorial



On standby during the 2021 National Administration Police (AP) Recruits Pass out Parade in Embakasi

*“What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us; what we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal.”*

**— Albert Pike**

# Pictorial



*Lady Captain's Prize Golf Tournament in Limuru*



*First Aid Awareness Session at Sabis International School in Runda, Nairobi*

# COVID Pandemic Pages

## What You Need to Know about the Omicron Variant



By Felix Musila (Communications and PR Officer)

A new Covid-19 variant, now named the **omicron variant**, was detected in South Africa on Wednesday, prompting renewed concern about the pandemic, a major stock market drop, and the imposition of new international travel restrictions to stop the spread.

Though the variant's existence was first reported by South Africa, it has also been found in Belgium, Botswana, Germany, Hong Kong, Israel, Italy, and the United Kingdom, meaning the variant has already spread — though how far is unclear, as new cases continue cropping up around the world.

While it will take scientists some weeks to understand the omicron variant, including how quickly it can spread and what the illness from infection with the variant looks like, the World Health Organization has already labeled omicron a **“variant of concern,”** which means it could be more transmissible, more virulent, or more able to evade the protection granted by vaccines than the original strain of Covid-19.

More information about the new variant is sure to emerge over the coming days and weeks, but here's what experts are saying so far.



### What Do we Know About the New Variant?

Early evidence suggests that the omicron variant is highly contagious, possibly more so than the delta variant. With more than 30 mutations on the spike protein — the part of the virus that binds to a human cell, infecting it — omicron could both be more transmissible and have more mechanisms to evade immunity already conferred by vaccines or prior infection.

Compared to its pandemic peak, cases in South Africa are relatively low right now. However, the country has still seen a substantial spike in new infections: On Friday, South Africa reported 2,828 new Covid-19 cases, according to the Associated Press, with as many as 90 percent of those cases potentially caused by the omicron variant.

Reinfection is also a concern with the new variant, according to the

journal Nature, but at this early stage, it's difficult to tell how likely reinfection or breakthrough infections actually are.

Whether the efficacy of treatments such as monoclonal antibodies — and new pill treatments from Pfizer and Merck — will be the same against the omicron variant is also unclear, as is the new variant's virulence, or how sick it will make those infected.

According to the WHO, the earliest known case of the omicron variant was on November 9, and the mutation was first detected November 24 in South Africa, which has an advanced detection system. While the delta variant is still the dominant strain worldwide and currently accounts for 99.9 percent of cases in the US, the discovery of the omicron variant has coincided with a spike in South African cases — a more than 1,400 percent increase over the past two weeks, according to the New York Times.

## How Concerned Should I Be?

While there are still many unknowns about the omicron variant, experts agree that it's a troubling development in the Covid-19 pandemic.

This one is concerning. This one is different. There are a lot of features here that have me and many of us concerned about this.

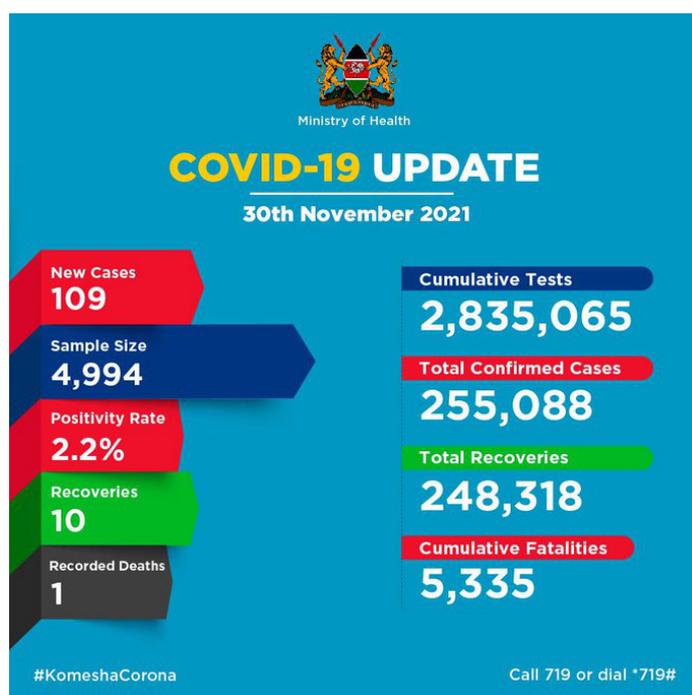
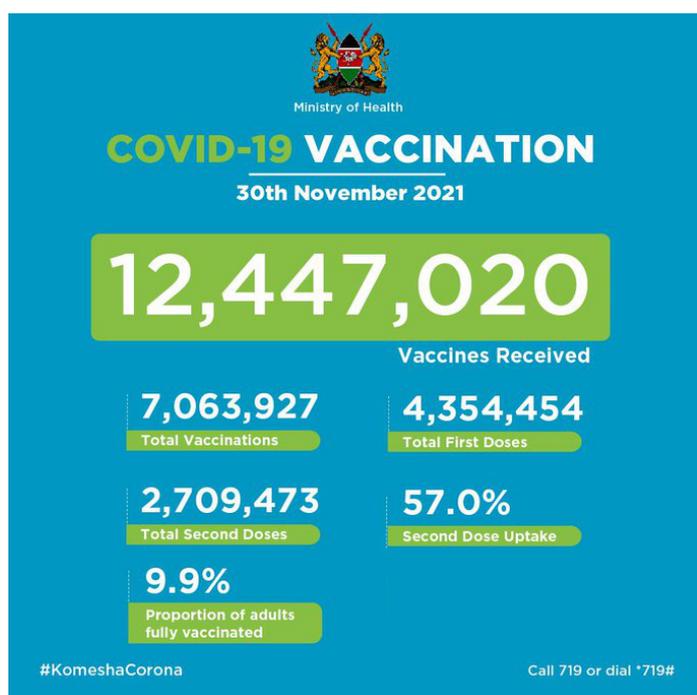
Stopping the spread also means stopping the possibility of harmful mutations to the virus. Mutations — changes to the makeup of the virus — are bound

to happen, and many of them are harmless to people. The more opportunities the virus has to spread, however, the more chance it has to mutate into a variation that spreads faster, is more resistant to antibodies and treatments, or creates worse health outcomes — or even all of these negative traits.

Existing tools, however, should still be effective in stopping omicron — PCR tests appear to detect the variant, according to the WHO. Additionally, masking

and social distancing both are proven strategies to stop the spread of Covid-19, as are getting vaccinated and getting a booster shot.

Those steps are especially crucial as the holiday season and cold weather bring people together indoors, where transmission occurs.



Source: Ministry of Health, Government of Kenya | Data as at 30th October 2021

*If you need to contribute articles/materials to the E-Plus NewsPod,  
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