

# Howza speaks out against silent killer

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HOWZA is a muscleman and the epitome of good health, but this week the kwaito star and former Generations actor shattered that image when he spoke about his behind-the-scenes battle with diabetes.

As the world marked Diabetes Day yesterday, Howza, whose real name is Tshepo Mosese, finally opened up about his condition.

He has Type 1 diabetes, which simply means that his pancreas cannot produce insulin at all and therefore he has to inject himself with it every day.

While his peers' survival kit includes cigarettes, gum and booze, Howza travels with his insulin injection, sweets and glucometer.

"People hardly believe it when I tell them that I am diabetic. They fall off their chairs laughing," he said. "They think it's a disease for the elderly, but the truth is it also affects young people like me."

Howza, who also presents Sunday youth show Big Up on SABC1, said he felt it was the right time to come out, after pharmaceutical company Novo Nordisk approached him to be part of the Changing Diabetes Campaign.

Now his task is to spread the word about the silent killer that claims thousands of lives every year in the country. At present it is estimated that 7% of the South African population is diabetic, which translates into about three million people. Recent studies have also shown a rise in diabetes in the Indian community.

Howza was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes five years ago after he lost weight in a short space of time, also his eyesight was weakening and he was always thirsty. He went to the doctor with diabetes as the last explanation on his mind. Today, he said, having diabetes was a blessing in disguise.

"It was a warning from God because at that time I was a member of Gun Powder and I lived recklessly, drinking a lot and living on junk food. I've had to straighten up and do the right things and make good choices, such as cutting alcohol out of my life. I now exercise regularly and eat the right food."

Howza said the message was that people had to cover the basics

of a healthy and balanced diet and do some exercise. "I do think of dying. Everyone is going to die some day, so I've resolved to live my life to the full and I know that I can't die without living to the fullest. I am a much cooler person without drinking."

"My greatest worry is that some people are walking around unaware that they are diabetic. It is important to test at least once a year, regardless of your age."

Shelley Harris, public relations manager at Novo Nordisk, who also facilitated the World Diabetes Day celebrations, said Howza sends the message that you can be diabetic and still be healthy and not compromise your lifestyle. She added that Howza was chosen as a spokesperson as youngsters were more likely to listen to him.

"He is a well-built young man, he is vibrant and charismatic and he is the one person who shows that you can live well with diabetes as long as you have your daily insulin shot."

Howza would soon be going to Greece with some journalists to learn more about the disease and share his experiences with other diabetes sufferers from countries in the Gulf and other African states.

Last night Table Mountain in Cape Town and the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria were lit up in blue, commemorating World Diabetes Day. There was also a run/walk event at the Cricket Oval in Chatsworth, Durban, in which Howza participated.

## Diabetes affects all

- Oscar-winning actress Halle Berry has Type 2 diabetes.
- American Idols judge Randy Jackson has Type 2 diabetes.
- Actress Selma Hayek had gestational diabetes when she was pregnant with her daughter.
- Soul diva Patti LaBelle has Type 2 diabetes.
- CNN talkshow host Larry King has Type 2 diabetes.
- Nick Jonas of the Jonas Brothers has Type 1 diabetes.

### WHAT A GUY

... Actor and musician Tshepo Mosese, aka Howza, has Type 1 diabetes

Picture: Leon Sadiki

