



## **GAUTENG PROVINCE**

HEALTH  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

### **MEDIA STATEMENT**

**SUNDAY, 18 FEBRUARY 2024**

#### **PROTECT GIRLS AGAINST CERVICAL CANCER LATER IN LIFE WITH THE HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS VACCINE**

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), after breast cancer, cervical cancer is the second most common and leading cause of cancer deaths among women in South Africa, particularly among adolescents and women aged 15 to 44.

Over 70% of cervical cancer cases are caused by the infection to the cervix (mouth of the womb) by the Human Papillomavirus (HPV), which is sexually transmitted. In the country, more than 5 000 new cases are reported every year and most are fatal.

In order to ensure that girls are and remain protected against cervical cancer later in life, it is important that they get the HPV vaccine between the ages of 9 and 15, before they are sexually active.

To effect this life-saving approach, the Gauteng Department of Health is currently running the HPV vaccination first round campaign in all public primary and special schools in Gauteng which commenced on 05 February and will end on 20 March 2024.

The campaign is mainly targeted at Grade 5 girls aged from 9 years and above, and are vaccinated with a single dose of the Cervarix HPV Vaccine which is very safe and effective in preventing the HPV infection caused by type 16 and 18 HPV strains.

During the previous vaccination drive in September to October 2023, a total of 74 359 out of 87 910 (84.6%) Grade 5 girls were fully vaccinated with HPV 2nd dose vaccine. Those girls who were not yet 9-years-old or were absent during the campaign will be given their catchup single doses. Unlike in the previous years, the vaccine is now administered in a single dose instead of two.

The MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko appealed to parents, caregivers and legal guardians who have not yet signed the consent form to do so to ensure that their children do not miss out on the HPV single dose vaccination campaign.

“We wish to appeal to those who had not signed the consent to think about the long-term implications of not having their children immunised. By giving consent, you are taking a responsible step to ensure that we save the future of our girls, a single dose at a time,” pleaded the MEC.

A mother of an eligible girl child aged 9, Matshidiso Luta (39) from Vereeniging, who is also a cervical cancer survivor said that she was pleased that she received the consent form and gave permission for the school health team to administer the HPV vaccine on her daughter.

“I feel very blessed and relieved knowing that my daughter will get the HPV vaccine to protect her against cervical cancer. I do not want to see her go through the same stressful, difficult and painful time I went through during my battle with the disease,” said Luta.

A consent form that is signed and ticked on all the boxes at the beginning of the year is used for routine comprehensive Integrated School Health Programme (ISHP) and is valid for the whole year. ISHP includes school health screening (eye health, hearing, oral assessment, nutritional assessments, deworming) and onsite health services.

**Ends/**

**Issued by the Gauteng Department of Health**

**For more information please contact:**

Motalatale Modiba, Head of Communication: 064 803 0808 or <a href="mailto:healthmediaenquiries@gauteng.gov.za">healthmediaenquiries@gauteng.gov.za</a>	Tshepo Shawa, Spokesperson for the MEC for Health: 072 222 6333 or <a href="mailto:Tshepo.Shawa@gauteng.gov.za">Tshepo.Shawa@gauteng.gov.za</a>
--	---

**For media releases, speeches and news visit the Gauteng Department of Health’s portal at [www.gauteng.gov.za](http://www.gauteng.gov.za)**