



## Health services are accessible to sexual assault and GBV victims even before a police case is opened

It is important that victims of sexual assault and gender-based violence (GBV), go to their nearest health facility as soon as possible, preferably within 72 hours after an assault, for medical examination, treatment and prevention of sexually transmitted infections.

The Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) has 27 designated Clinical Forensic Medical Services (CFMS) facilities across the province with qualified clinicians that provide counselling, medical examinations and treatment, post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) and can refer victims for psychosocial support and give follow up dates.

MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko emphasised the need for victims to get access to these services so that they can get the necessary care and be advised of preventative measures to protect themselves from HIV and pregnancies.

"It is important that community members are aware of the services we offer, especially the provision of medical care to survivors or living victims. These centres provide a comprehensive package which include sexual offence care, domestic violence, intimate partner violence, child abuse (both sexual and physical) and substance abuse," said the MEC.

Between April and September 2023, a total of 5 103 sexual offence, 2 287 domestic violence of

which 2 442 were intimate partner violence, and 47 human trafficking cases have been seen at the 27 designated CFMS centres.

Of the total sexual offences seen, 1 728 (33%) were reported after 72 hours of the incident and 508 (9%) of the victims tested positive for HIV. The earlier the PEP is administered on the victims, the lower the risk of contracting HIV from an infected perpetrator. Often victims delay in getting medical care as they think they must first open a case with the police.

What people need to know is that the CFMS centres also conduct clinical forensic examination (medical evidence collection) of both survivors or living victims and perpetrators of interpersonal violence which assist the police in their investigation and their findings and conclusions (expert opinion) get presented in a court of law to facilitate the judicial process.

Meanwhile, in an effort to improve the provision of healthcare services for victims of sexual assault, rape and gender-based violence (GBV), the Gauteng Department is expanding the much-needed intervention to Carletonville Hospital on Friday, 08 December 2023.

The hospital recorded a total of 208 sexual offence and 42 domestic violence patients in

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~ MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko



Gauteng MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko together with Pristem Global Diagnostic CEO, Lars Beykirch officially opened the first radiology diagnostic centre in Alexandra township.

The diagnostic centre is equipped with an innovative and scalable radiology solution developed by Pristem to address a conspicuous need for quality diagnostic services within South Africa's healthcare space which will ultimately have a meaningful impact on disadvantaged communities.

The MEC commended the establishment of a new diagnostics centre in Alexandra, a private initiative realised through a collaboration between Open Diagnostic and Pristem Global Diagnostics South Africa. She aligned this development with the 6th administration's priorities, emphasising its significant role in enhancing healthcare accessibility in the township.

The MEC further said that "this centre is celebrated as a major step towards equitable healthcare, symbolising a commitment to the community's well-being and representing a beacon of hope and progress for the residents of Alexandra". [#AsibeHealthyGP](#)

the 2022/23 financial year, whereas 67 sexual offence and 12 domestic violence patients were seen between April to September 2023.

# Communities urged to take the lead in the fight against HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS remains a persistent health challenge, affecting millions of lives around the world. Despite significant advancements in treatment and prevention, a substantial number of people remain unaware of their HIV status. This lack of awareness not only hinders individual health but also poses a risk to the broader community.

This year’s World AIDS Day commemoration was observed under the theme of “Let Communities Lead”, which seeks to recognise the central role that communities can play in the fight against HIV/AIDS. During her remarks at the Gauteng Provincial commemoration event, Health and Wellness MEC, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko, reiterated the need for communities to be at the forefront in eradicating HIV/AIDS.

“Communities play a pivotal role in raising awareness to encourage others to test for HIV and provide support to those already affected by the disease. As stakeholders, we need to empower communities with accurate information to enable them to take charge of their health and continue the momentum towards ending the epidemic” said MEC.

Communities are urged to break down barriers, challenge stigma, discrimination and create an environment of acceptance and support to those living with HIV/AIDS.



The Acting Premier of Gauteng, Lebogang Maile, reiterated this message by highlighting the importance of community engagement and leadership in driving the testing agenda. All members of Gauteng communities including non-governmental organisations, civil society, faith-based organisations, activists’ movements were encouraged to be in the forefront to mobilise individuals to get tested, promote regular testing, and fostering a culture of openness and support.

Reflecting on the progress made in fighting against HIV/AIDS, the Acting Premier commended the province for the ongoing efforts to ensure increased access to testing, treatment, and support services and for extending these crucial health services to vulnerable and underserved areas of the community. Gauteng Department of Health is determined to ensure that key and vulnerable populations, such as people who use drugs, sex workers, men who have sex with men, and transgender individuals have access to friendly centres in their communities.

The Acting Premier emphasised the province’s unwavering commitment to achieving the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets, which aim for 95% of people living

with HIV to know their status, 95% of those diagnosed to be on treatment, and 95% of those on treatment to achieve viral suppression. These goals reflect the province’s dedication to fostering a compassionate and informed community that supports the fight against HIV/AIDS.

“I want to urge everyone to embrace the power of community leadership in driving HIV testing efforts. By knowing our status, we not only empower ourselves but also contribute to the collective effort to end the AIDS epidemic. Together, we can create communities that prioritise health, support one another, and work towards achieving the UNAIDS 95-95-95 targets”, said the Acting Premier.

Testing for HIV is the most vital step to know your status, which is crucial towards effective management of the virus and ensuring access to life-saving treatments. Visit your nearest health facilities across the province to get tested to know your status. Knowing your HIV status will empower you to make informed decisions about your health and take appropriate actions to protect yourself and your loved ones.



Take charge of your health and get tested to know your status and encourage others to do the same. Early detection and treatment are crucial in managing HIV/AIDS.

# How to enjoy the outdoors and reduce the risk of heat-related skin cancer

As South Africa enters the festive season, with many people heading to different destinations and engage in outdoor activities, it is crucial to raise awareness about the potential risks of heat-related skin cancer. With recent heatwaves sweeping the country, it is more important than ever to prioritise sun protection and adopt sun-smart behaviours to safeguard our skin from harmful UV radiation.

Prolonged exposure to solar UV radiation can result in acute and chronic health effects on the skin, eye, and immune system. Acutely, excessive UV radiation exposure can cause sunburn (erythema), which is a well-known consequence of unprotected sun exposure.

Skin cancer is a global health concern with melanoma (malignant melanoma) and non-melanoma as the most common skin cancers. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the incidence of both non-melanoma and melanoma skin cancers has been increasing over the past decades. WHO estimates that a 10% decrease in ozone levels will result in an additional



300,000 non-melanoma and 4,500 melanoma skin cancer cases globally.

South Africa, in particular, faces a high burden of skin cancer. According to the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA), the country has the second-highest incidence of skin cancer in the world after Australia, and one of the highest incidences of melanoma worldwide. Every year, at least 20,000 South Africans are diagnosed with non-melanoma skin cancers, while approximately 1,500 individuals are diagnosed with melanoma.

Although skin cancer is a highly preventable and treatable disease caused by chronic exposure to sunlight, it is important to note that no one is immune. Skin cancer can affect anyone, regardless of skin type or colour, gender, race or age.

Heatwaves can intensify the sun’s UV radiation, making it even more harmful to our skin. The combination of high temperatures and prolonged sun exposure can cause damage to the skin cells, leading to an increased risk of skin cancer.

It is therefore essential to exercise caution during heatwaves and take proactive measures to protect our skin. Use the following SunSmart tips to reduce the risk of heat-related skin cancer and prioritise sun protection.

- Seek Shade - when spending time outdoors, seek shade under trees, umbrellas, or canopies to reduce direct exposure to the sun’s rays. This can significantly lower your risk of sunburn and heat-related skin damage.
- Wear Protective Clothing - cover your skin with loose-fitting lightweight clothing, wear hats that provide shade for your face, neck, and ears. Additionally, wear sunglasses with UV protection to shield your eyes from harmful rays.
- Apply Sunscreen - use broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher. Apply it to all skin areas not covered by clothing. Reapply sunscreen every two hours, or more frequently if swimming or sweating.
- Time your outdoor activities - plan outdoor activities early in the morning or later in the afternoon when the sun’s rays are less intense. This can help minimise your exposure to harmful UV radiation.
- Stay Hydrated - during heatwaves, it is crucial to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water. Proper hydration helps maintain the health and elasticity of your skin, reducing the risk of heat-related skin damage.

By adopting sun safety practices and raising awareness about the significance of sun protection, we can ensure healthier lives. This Skin Cancer Awareness Month – from 1 December to 31 January – let us be sun smart and educate ourselves and children about the dangers of over exposure to the sun and its rays.

# SUNSMART

## SKIN CANCER AWARENESS

Prevention is the best defence against heat-related skin cancer. Avoid prolonged sun exposure, especially during midday when the sun's rays are the strongest.



## Healthcare workers call for an end to gender-based violence and femicide

In a resounding show of solidarity, Ekurhuleni Clinic Forensic Medical Services spearheaded a significant march to mark the start of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence & Femicide. The march, which saw active participation from healthcare workers, aimed to shine a spotlight on the pressing issue of gender-based violence and to encourage collective efforts in combating this pervasive problem.

Starting from Bertha Gxowa Hospital, the march made its way through the streets of Germiston, with a notable stop at the Germiston taxi rank, before culminating at the Germiston South African Police Service (SAPS) station. The procession served as a poignant reminder of the urgent need for action against gender-based violence and femicide, which continues to impact countless lives on a daily basis.

The campaign not only provided a platform for healthcare workers to lead the charge but also



amplified the voices of survivors, advocates, and activists who are working tirelessly to put an end to gender-based violence.

Through their shared stories and experiences participants jointly committed to support individuals to break the silence, challenge stigmas, and seek the necessary medical assistance while fostering a sense of solidarity among those affected.

During the march, Dr. Menzi Mkhize from Bertha Gxowa Care Centre took to the stage to address the crowd, shedding light on the alarming statistics surrounding violence against women. He highlighted that South African women are tragically killed at a rate five times higher than the global average.

Statistics show that a staggering number of 10,818 rape cases were reported in the first quarter of 2022, which indicate that every three hours a woman is being raped. These

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## 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM FOR NO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Any victim of sexual assault or rape should go to their nearest health facility to access services ASAP. You don't need a police case to receive Post-Exposure Prophylaxis treatment or Emergency Contraceptives Pills to prevent pregnancy.

*"Accelerating actions to end gender-based violence & femicide: leaving no one behind"*



# FESTIVE SEASON SAFETY TIPS



## WHAT TO DO WHEN INVOLVED IN AN ACCIDENT

Stay safe this festive season. For any emergencies, please call Emergency Medical Services on: 10177 or 112. If you are involved in an accident make sure to:

- Stay calm.
- Move away from the road surface if it is safe to do so.
- Call Emergency Medical Services and speak clearly and slowly.
- Share a specific detail about the location of the accident such as road name, area, town, nearest crossing or provide land marks, if you can.
- Share specific details about the incident such as what happened and how many people are involved.
- Provide a contact number for someone that will be staying at the scene of the accident.



### Dedicated Alex clinic staff help stabbed victim recover

In the early hours of the night, my cousin was unfortunately stabbed multiple times and urgently rushed to Alex Clinic for immediate medical assistance. When we arrived at the clinic, his wounds were still unattended and bleeding. However, upon arrival my cousin received medical attention. Although, he was initial weak he gradually improved thanks to the excellent care received at Alex clinic. We are grateful for the dedicated healthcare professionals who played a crucial role in his recovery.

Anna Letsoalo via Gauteng Health Department Facebook page

\* Letter grammatically edited



## QUALITY ASSURANCE CONTACT US!



For any **hospital or clinic complaints** please **contact** the **Gauteng Department of Health** on the **24-hour customer line** on.



**0800 203 886** (Toll free number)



**patients.health@gauteng.gov.za** or  
**support@gauteng.gov.za**



**SMS : 35023**

For letters, contribution and suggestion contact [GDoHstories@gauteng.gov.za](mailto:GDoHstories@gauteng.gov.za)

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