



GAUTENG PROVINCE

HEALTH
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

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THE POWER OF HAND HYGIENE EMPHASISED AS A DISEASES CONTROL MEASURE

The Gauteng Department of Health (GDoH) joins the global community in observing World Hand Hygiene Day to raise awareness about the importance of hand hygiene in preventing the spread of diseases.

World Hand Hygiene Day is observed annually on 5 May to improve hand hygiene standards at home and the workplace thereby protecting health and care workers and communities from infections and curbing the spread of harmful germs.

The 2024 theme is *“Promoting knowledge and capacity building of health and care workers through innovative and impactful training and education, on infection prevention and control, including hand hygiene”*.

“It is critical that the health and care workers and the public at large make hand hygiene a non-negotiable routine in their daily lives as a simple, yet powerful tool to safeguard their wellbeing. Through advocacy and education, we can foster these good habits that help prevent the spread of diseases,” emphasises Gauteng MEC for Health and Wellness, Nomantu Nkomo-Ralehoko.

Hand hygiene has proven effective as a preventive measure during the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent Cholera outbreak.

It is important to always remember that when practiced properly, hand hygiene can help to prevent the spread of viruses including respiratory and diarrheal infections at home and in public settings. Hands should be washed with a soap or alcohol-based sanitiser for a at least 20 seconds, covering all surfaces of the hands including the palms, back of hands, between fingers, back of fingers, thumbs, fingertips and wrists.

“As we enter the winter months which often sees an increase in cases of flu infections. The message around hand hygiene is even more urgent as a proactive measure to protect ourselves and loved ones to stop the

spread of respiratory infections such as influenza,” points out MEC Nkomo-Ralehoko.

Furthermore, the GDoH encourages the public, especially those at high risk of severe influenza (adults aged 65 years and older, people with underlying illness such as heart and lung disease and people living with HIV and tuberculosis, as well as pregnant people), to visit their nearest public clinics (on first come-first serve basis) or healthcare providers for flu vaccination. Getting vaccinated is a safe and effective way to protect yourself and those around you from influenza.

In an effort to raise awareness the GDoH health facilities will embark on a handwashing campaign targeting healthcare workers, patients and the public about the significance of hand hygiene from 5 to 10 May 2024.

Ends//

Issued by the Gauteng Department of Health

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