



PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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**TO: ALL MEDIA**

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## **13-19 PREGNANCY AWARENESS WEEK**

Women, Maternal and Child health is one of the main focuses for the Department of Health. 13-19 February is Pregnancy Awareness Week and the department continues to intensify health promotion and create awareness around women and child health.

To achieve this the department has been offering health services for pregnant women and children under 5 years of age free of charge. Despite the free health services, there are still many women who do not attend antenatal care, and there are still many women who start attending ante natal clinics very late in their pregnancy.

The month of February is specially set aside to create greater pregnancy education awareness.

The Department Of Health is striving to strengthen pregnancy education and stress important issues that promote healthy pregnancy and safe motherhood.

It is vital that pregnant women should start attending antenatal care as soon as they suspect that they are pregnant and certainly within their first trimester.

Early antenatal care attendance provides good opportunity to exclude and manage existing medical conditions which impact negatively on pregnancy outcomes. Some of these conditions are also aggravated by the state of pregnancy. Examples of these conditions are hypertension, diabetes, infections and anaemia.



Early antenatal care attendance allows for timeous provision of free HIV testing and voluntary counselling (VCT). Knowing one's HIV status and receiving voluntary counselling enables one to adopt a healthy lifestyle, healthy living styles and safe health seeking behaviour.

- Early recognition of danger signs in Pregnancy and Post Delivery
- Birth preparedness and complication readiness
- Prevention of delay to seek medical attention
- Self care including nutrition and high standard of hygiene
- The role of the father, the male partner and the family

Pregnant women need to know their rights, many of which include:

- The right of a woman to choose her companion who will provide her with support during pregnancy and childbirth, and who will accompany her to the antenatal care clinic as well as she goes into labour.
- The right of the woman to be treated with respect, dignity and confidentiality
- The right of the woman to ask questions and also to get explanation about her condition

It is important that family members and the community should support the pregnant woman so that avoidable complications of her pregnancy can be prevented.

**ENDS.**

**For more information please call Ms Janet Dalton on 083 547 1168 or Lindiwe Khuzwayo on 083 393 9943**