

**SPEECH BY KZN HEALTH MEC, DR SIBONGISENI DHLOMO
TAKING THE H1N1 PUBLIC EDUCATION AND COMMUNICABLE
DISEASES CAMPAIGN TO WESTVILLE PRISON
5 OCTOBER 2009**

Westville Prison Commissioner

Partners from Dettol

District Health Officials

Media Practitioners

Friends

We appreciate the partnership we have with the Department of Correctional Services as we work together in the quest to provide a better health for our people wherever they are in this beautiful Province.

We also thank the management of Dettol for taking a bold step of committing resources to assist the Department in its fight against the spread of the **Influenza A H1N1** that has a potential of taking the lives of many people if not well managed.

Our mandate as a Department is to save lives. Today we have come to this facility to provide awareness mostly about the communicable diseases that flourish in a closed and congested environment like a prison.

Working together with the Correctional Services we have plans in place that look **Epidemic Preparedness and Response** whose **function is to**

- Ensure that an Early Warning System for potential outbreaks is established and functional for early detection of potential epidemics
- Conduct epidemiological investigation of infectious diseases outbreak
- Formulate and implement operational response procedures
- Monitor and evaluate preparedness and response activities
- Coordinate assistance for epidemic prevention and control from various partners like we are doing with Dettol today

Our focus today is the **Influenza A H1N1** which is a new type of influenza that requires us to discuss ways of curbing its spread. The recent number of infected persons, according to the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD), in the province has reached **2008 with 17 deaths confirmed** hence our focus today is on ways to:

- (i) prevent the spread of the Influenza A virus,
- (ii) take care of the sick,
- (iii) advise pregnant women and people with underlying conditions such as heart, lung diseases and those with low immunities including people with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

Our take on this matter is that proper hygiene is important to disease prevention. This we were taught at very low grades in schools. But as we grow up we tend to be very lax about these basic things.

Informing and educating people on proper ways to cough can help in preventing the spread of diseases such as TB.

The washing of hands is very important to prevent the outbreaks such as cholera from reoccurring again.

Influenza A H1N1

You can prevent getting infected by avoiding close contact with people who show influenza-like symptoms (trying to maintain a distance of about 1 meter if possible) and taking the following measures:

- avoid touching your mouth and nose;
- clean hands thoroughly with soap and water, or
- cleanse them with an alcohol-based hand rub on a regular basis (especially if touching the mouth and nose, or surfaces that are potentially contaminated);
- avoid close contact with people who might be ill;
- reduce the time spent in crowded settings if possible;
- improve airflow in your living space by opening windows;
- practice good health habits including adequate sleep, eating nutritious food, and keeping physically active.

As a department of health we view this public education campaign as assisting in the prevention of a number of other communicable diseases.

T.B

TB is a disease that mainly affects the lungs, but can be found in any other body organ. The germs are present in the sputum coughed up by those that have TB of the lungs. The germs usually destroy the soft tissue of the lungs, and this causes cavities (holes) in the lungs, resulting in difficulty with breathing, and blood can be coughed up. If untreated, TB can cause death.

How do people get TB?

The disease is passed on from person to person. When a person who has TB coughs, sneezes or spits, germs are spread into the air from where they can be breathed in.

Who is at risk

Persons with diseases like diabetes and AIDS

Persons who take excessive alcohol, and drug addicts

Persons with poor nutrition and lack of food

Persons suffering from stress

Persons living in poorly ventilated, over-crowded rooms

What are the signs and symptoms of TB?

A cough for longer than 2 weeks

Chest pains

Tiredness and weakness of the body

Loss of appetite and weight

Night sweats, even when it is cold

Coughing up blood

How is TB diagnosed?

Any of the signs and symptoms mentioned may be an indication of the disease. Seek help at your clinic or hospital if you have these symptoms. **TB testing and treatment is free.**

Treatment of TB

You need to be made aware that **TB can be cured with little or no complications.** Medication must, however, be started as soon as possible and it must be taken regularly according to the instructions given at the clinic.

It takes 6 months for TB to be cured completely, but within 2 weeks of starting treatment, the person will no longer spread the disease. **Treatment must be completed.**

TB and HIV Interactions

HIV increases the risk of developing TB. Not all HIV-positive people have TB. Not all people with TB are HIV-positive. It is important to know that TB can be cured even if a person is HIV positive.

Cholera

Cholera is a bacterial infection which is contracted by drinking contaminated water or by eating food which has been in contact with contaminated water, flies or soiled hands.

Symptoms

- Watery stools (diarrhoea sudden in onset)
- Vomiting
- Rapid Dehydration (caused by loss of body water)

To Prevent Cholera

- Use only clean, treated or boiled water.
- Wash all raw food with clean, treated or boiled water
- Wash your hands before handling or eating food
- Wash food utensils in clean, treated or boiled water
- Protect food from fly contamination and prevent fly contamination
- Use proper toilet facilities only and wash hands after use.

We also consider it very important that we utilize this platform to enlighten each other about **HIV and AIDS**.

Our objective here is: *Maximizing Health and Slow the Progression towards full blown AIDS*. Our people wherever they are must know that in the context of HIV, AIDS and STI Strategic Plan, government has made a wide range of HIV and AIDS-related services available. These services include:

- voluntary counseling and testing
- prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV
- STI management and

- Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for both occupational exposures and survivors of sexual assault
- orphan care programmes and nutritional supplementation

We are all expected to take good care of our lives through:

- adoption of healthy lifestyles
- cessation of unhealthy habits (e.g. unsafe sex, use of tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs and unsterilized needs
- Adherence to ARV treatment in order to maintain long-term health benefits and avoid development of drug resistance

Let me close by thanking all of you, the Westville Prison management, our partners at Dettol, friends serving different terms – in gracing this very special occasion of sharing with you information on the Influenza A H1N1.

I THANK YOU!