

May 10 is Move for Health Day - 'Parks, open spaces and community halls give people places and spaces to be active

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The MEC for Health in KwaZulu-Natal, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, encourages all people of the province to get active on May 10th for Move for Health Day.

Move for Health Day is an international event created in 2002 by the World Health Organization to promote physical activity. MEC Dhlomo is a leading sitting politician in KwaZulu-Natal to promote the benefits of healthy active living. Move for Health Day events bring people together in a spirit of fun, inclusivity, and support of healthy active living. "Your community and/or workplace could host a walk, create a physical activity challenge or any other activity that engages people in the celebration of being active," says MEC Dhlomo.

Parks, open spaces, and community halls give people places and spaces to relax, reflect, be active and to meet with friends and neighbours says the MEC; Dr Dhlomo. "Promoting these social resources increases access to physical activity and social gathering opportunities for citizens." The MEC joins the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, in expressing his concern with the 'increasing rate of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) or lifestyle diseases as they are also referred to'.

The Minister said, in a press release on the 28th April ahead of the WHO Conference on Non-communicable diseases in Moscow; "It is high time that we mount a serious assault against diseases such as hypertension, diabetes among others in the same way that we are doing against HIV and AIDS."

South Africa has over the years seen an increase in diseases such as hypertension, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes increasing among South Africa's population.

The MEC says that preliminary results of the KwaZulu-Natal Primary Health Care (PHC) Disease Profile indicate that out of a total of 10,009 PHC patients, the highest number of patients (12.4%) presented with hypertension followed by TB (9.9%), respiratory illnesses (9.4%), upper respiratory tract illnesses (5.4%) and HIV (5.0%). He adds that the National Burden of Disease in South Africa have as the most common causes of mortality in public hospitals as TB, gastroenteritis, pneumonia, hypertension and cancer.

It is believed that these diseases affect the younger populations (teenagers included) and the economically active. "We have been advised that for every R1 spent in healthy and active promoting programmes; we save about R100 in healthcare spending in chronic diseases of lifestyle," says MEC Dhlomo.

"The call on the Move for Health Day is to start addressing the two main risk factors for non-communicable diseases, namely, diet and physical activity," calls MEC Dhlomo. "Engaging in physical activity is essential for building strong bodies, healthy minds, self esteem, social skills, and community values. It can improve family interactions and reduce depression, stress, loneliness, and self-destructive and anti-social behaviour."

The private sector can also be a significant player as responsible employers and as advocates for healthy lifestyles. All could become partners with government and non-governmental organizations in implementing measures aimed at sending positive and consistent messages to facilitate and enable integrated efforts to encourage healthy eating and physical activity.

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