

MEDIA RELEASE
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KZN Health MEC allays fears over H1N1 Flu

KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Health, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, has allayed fears of a reported outbreak of H1N1 flu, saying that people with a strong immune system need not worry about getting infected.

Speaking in Durban today, Dr Dhlomo also urged those with a compromised immune system who hadn't yet received their flu vaccine to ensure that they were vaccinated against flu. This will lead to automatic vaccination against the H1N1 flu strain.

"About two months ago, we made a call as the Department of Health for people to undergo a flu vaccine. The vaccine on offer in South Africa for this flu season includes cover for the H1N1 strain. H1N1 is not a new disease anymore. It's been around for a number of years. Most of the population has now developed immunity against it," he said.

Dr Dhlomo said that since the majority of flu cases will present with mild disease, the vaccine is recommended for people in the "high risk" group such as:

- All pregnant women,
- People with lung conditions eg: asthma,
- People with haematological and metabolic disorders eg: diabetes;
- HIV infected persons,
- Children below 4 years,
- Persons above 65years, and
- Institutionalised people.

"People who fall under this group should and must go for as flu vaccine, as H1N1 will be covered there," he said.

The MEC urged the public to follow basic infection prevention practice in order to protect themselves against flu, such as:

- Hand washing and cough etiquette,
- Keeping away from crowds if symptoms and signs of flu are developed.

He urged the public to further build up immunity against flu by exercising regularly.

"Like any other strain that comes and goes, if you get a flu, just get painkillers, drink water, rest and you'll be okay. Even if those with a normal immune system were to contract H1N1, it will just subside. Regular physical exercise means that you won't be susceptible to disease, as your body will have built up enough resistance."

ENDS

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