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KZN Health MEC calls for urgent action to avoid eye-related ailments

KWAZULU-Natal Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo has called on the people of the Province to take better care of their eyes to prevent problems, and act quickly when ailments arise.

This comes as the country commemorates World Eye Care Awareness Month, which starts on 19 September and runs to 16 October.

According to the South African National Council for the Blind (SACB), 80% of blindness can be prevented. A significant preventative measure is ensuring that your eyes are regularly tested, increasingly so as you age. Your eyes should be tested every 3- 5 years if you are over the age of 40 and annually once over the age of 60 since the elderly have a higher chance of attaining damages to the eyes resulting in conditions such as glaucoma and cataracts.

“Our concern is that most eye conditions are detected very late. Therefore, we would like to call for all people to have their eyes tested. Every child who complains about eyes should be taken to the doctor immediately. Children under the age of 5 years must get a dose of Vitamin A every six months. And people with Diabetes Mellitus and Hypertension must have their eyes tested yearly,” says KZN Health MEC.

MEC Dhlomo also stresses the importance of regular physical exercise, following a healthy diet and drinking a lot of water to reduce risk of chronic diseases. He adds that donating the cornea can be a very important gift to save other people’s eye sight.

MEC Dhlomo says the KwaZulu Natal Province is well equipped and resourced to deal with eye and sight problems saying:

‘In our hospitals we now have deployed ophthalmic nurses and we continue training more at the Edendale Nursing College. We also have optometrists even at Community Health Centres.’

For complicated eye problem cases, the Department has McCord Hospital which we commissioned in April 2015 as an Eye Care Centre of Excellence that offers:

- High volume cataract surgery service for the whole province with planned 40 operations per day
- Links secondary, tertiary and outreach eye services to all the districts
- Tertiary ophthalmic services
- Optometry and refractive service
- Optical laboratory for in-house production of glasses, contact lens in phases
- Regional Training centre for post graduate students, registrars in Ophthalmology, Ophthalmic nurses and Optometry students through the University KwaZulu Natal.

MEC Dhlomo says: “The fact that up to 80% of blindness is avoidable means that each and every one of us has a responsibility to ensure that we take better care of our precious eye-sight by presenting early to facilities. Help is at hand.”



MEC Dhlomo having his eyes tested

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