

# Enjoy Valentine's Day, but don't be holding an unplanned Valentine's Day baby nine months from now - warns KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo

13 February 2018

With Valentine's Day taking place on Wednesday, love is in the air. And, as South Africa commemorates STI / Condom Week from 10 – 16 February 2018, KZN Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo is warning young people to either abstain from sex, or use protection so that they do not contract sexually transmitted diseases or ruin their future by making babies that they have not planned for.

Recently, MEC Dhlomo has been targeting the student population at Tertiary Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges to disseminate messages to help the youth stay informed and make good decisions about concerning their lives.

He is urging youth to delay their sexual debut for as long as possible, saying that this is key to helping them realise their full potential, and to safeguard their positive educational and health outcomes.

*"February is generally known as the month of love. And with Valentine's Day upon us, we know that young people might be tempted to do things that might have negative long term effects for them, such as unsafe sex. Although most of the young people at tertiary institutions are disease-free, they are at high risk of teenage pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV."*

MEC Dhlomo says that national campaigns such as "First Things First"; DREAMS, and "She Conquers", will continue to be accelerated in the province, to help young people make informed choices about their sexual reproductive health.

*"We are particularly concerned with young women aged 15 and 24, who are at high risk of contracting HIV due to intergenerational and transactional relationships with Sugar Daddies and the so-called "Blessers.""*

MEC Dhlomo says that research has shown that older men who have had years of sexual experience – the so-called Blessers - are the ones who infect young women with HIV. The young women then, in turn, infect boys their own age.

*"On Valentine's Day and beyond, we are saying to young women in particular, the men who sleep with them do not do so out of love, but out of lust. Our message is, 'You don't need someone who will come into your life and yield negative results.' We are intensifying these campaigns, and will continue engaging with young people."*

MEC Dhlomo said young people who cannot abstain from sex should rather use Dual Protection, which is a combination of medical male circumcision and using condoms during every sexual episode; while combining this with contraceptive methods for women.

*"I plead with you to be responsible for your health. With the range of free health services available to the public, anyone who falls pregnant or gets infected with a sexually transmitted infection will only have themselves to blame."*



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