

Vryheid diarrhoea outbreak shows strong signs of subsiding as fewer people present with illness; Samples show no proof of Cholera, says MEC Dhlomo

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KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC says that the recent outbreak of diarrhoea that recently led to the admission of 535 people in Vryheid is showing signs of subsiding. MEC Dhlomo today visited Vryheid Hospital, where he interacted with patients and district health officials. He was briefed about drastic improvements that have been noted, following a series of interventions.

“From the 22 of March there’ve been 535 admissions at Vryheid Hospital, referred mainly from Bhekuzulu Clinic and Mason Clinic,” said MEC Dhlomo. “These are clinics serving Bhekuzulu location, Lakeside and Vryheid town. We are happy to announce that there’s been no single death from this diarrhoea outbreak in this area. “The lab results of both stools of the patients and the water samples are showing no sign of vibrio cholera, typhoid or any other known pathogens that cause severe diarrhoea. We have advised the community that they must boil water, even if it comes from the tap. We are also aware that the municipality has increased the chlorine content at the reservoirs. “The laboratory will continue to look for any other pathogens that might be causing this irritant diarrhoea. But since these interventions that we’ve put in place, we have been noticing a decreasing number of admissions of patients with abdominal pain, diarrhoea and vomiting. “On the 3rd of April there were five admissions. Today, on the 4th of April there’s only been one admission. We therefore hope that these interventions will assist the community. The intervention at this hospital is excellent. Once admitted, the patients have been getting taken care of and discharged within three days, in a stable state, and ready to go back home.”

The Department has, in the recent past, urged the community of Vryheid and surrounding areas not to panic, but rather adhere to the following water and food safety protocols:

- *Use only bottled water, or water that has been disinfected with 1 teaspoon or 5ml of bleach into 20 – 25 litres of water, mix well and wait for at least 30 minutes before consumption.*
- *Then boil the water at least for a minute (let it bubble) to make it clean and safe.*
- *Wash all raw food with clean, treated or boiled water*
- *Wash your hands after visiting the toilet, and before handling or eating food*
- *Protect food from fly contamination and prevent fly contamination at home*
- *Do not allow children to play in dirty pools, rivulets or storm water outlets*
- *Do not contaminate rivers or leave sewage where it can be washed into a river by rain.*



MEC Dhlomo interacting with patients who are recovering from an outbreak of diarrhoea, at Vryheid Hospital

