

MEDIA STATEMENT

To: Editors & Health Journalists
Issued by: Department of Health
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Health Department commemorates African Vaccination week

Pretoria – The Department of Health urges parents and caregivers to ensure that their children are up-to-date with their vaccinations, as South Africa joins other African countries to mark African Vaccination Week (23-30 April) to promote the life-saving power of immunisation to protect people of all ages against vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles, mumps, rubella, polio, diphtheria, etc.

Vaccination remains the most cost-effective public health intervention to save lives and the first line of defence against many diseases. African Vaccination Week is simultaneously celebrated with other World Health Organization regions under the banner of World Immunization Week (WIW), and aims to strengthen advocacy for better access to vaccination across the life course.

According to the World Health Organization, immunisation prevents between 3.5 to 5 million deaths every year from diseases like diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), influenza and measles. Globally in 2023, there were 14.5 million children missing out on any vaccination – so-called zero-dose children. It is for this reason that the department is working with provinces and other stakeholders to address immunisation gaps and improve vaccination coverage in the country.

The Department will use the 2025 campaign to intensify vaccination and surveillance activities to close immunity gaps in poorly-performing districts which have been identified as having high numbers of under-vaccinated and unvaccinated children (also known as zero-dose children) as part of efforts to curb vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks. Although 80% of children in South Africa have received all their vaccination by the age of one year, this means that one in five children has missed one or more dose and is therefore not fully protected from vaccine-preventable diseases.

All vaccines contained in the National Immunisation Schedule are provided free-of-charge at all primary health care facilities across the country, and parents and caregivers are encouraged to check their child's Road-to-Health booklet and to take their child to a health facility for vaccination if the child is due for or has missed any doses.

African Vaccination Week 2025 is commemorated under the theme: "***Immunization for All is Humanly Possible***", which aims to highlight the profound impact of vaccines on human health and the potential to achieve global health security.

The Department will, on Tuesday, 29 April hold a webinar as part of African Vaccination Week activities to strengthen awareness of the importance of life course vaccines and provide continuous update on the new developments around vaccines in South Africa.

Details of the Webinar

Date: Tuesday, 29 April 2025

Time: 10h00 - 12h00

Link: https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_IVH53_ZkQtqRKDqTv4qi6g#/registration

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