

MEDIA STATEMENT

To: Editors & Health Journalists
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Health Department calls for vigilance as three new mpox cases are detected

Pretoria: The Department of Health would like to urge the public to take extra care as the country records three laboratory-confirmed cases of mpox. The first case was confirmed on 21 February in a 30-year-old male patient residing in Ekurhuleni, Gauteng Province with a recent travel history to Kampala, Uganda. The patient was diagnosed with Clade I mpox virus, which is currently circulating in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda and has been reported in travellers returning to many locations around the globe.

The other two cases, a 30-year-old male and a 27-year-old female, also from Ekurhuleni, were detected through contact tracing and monitoring conducted by outbreak response teams. This highlights the importance of information sharing by primary cases for contact tracing. All three cases are now recovering and self-isolating at home. This increases the total cumulative number of positive cases from 25 to 28 cases, including three deaths since the outbreak in May last year.

These are the first positive cases of mpox recorded in South Africa this year, and the last case was recorded in September 2024. Globally, mpox continues to be a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) and Public Health Emergency of Continental Security (PHECS) as per the declarations by both the World Health Organization and Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention in August 2024.

There is no need for public to panic, but people are urged to remain cautious of how mpox spreads and to seek help when faced with symptoms of mpox. The symptoms include a rash which may last for 2 - 4 weeks, fever, headache, muscle aches, back pain, low energy and swollen glands. Mpox is typically a mild and self-limiting disease with a low case fatality rate. The risk of wider transmission remains low in South Africa, but anyone can contract mpox regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation and race.

The Department urges all people experiencing any of the symptoms, with or without travel history to countries and regions experiencing mpox outbreaks, or who had close contact with known mpox patients to seek medical care. Although, the country has limited stock of mpox specific vaccine for treatment of patients who experience severe health complications as a result of this disease.

Safer sex and personal hygiene practices are amongst the most effective preventative methods to control further spread of the disease. People are therefore reminded to always wash hands with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially before eating or after using the toilet.

For more information and media enquiries, please contact:

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