

This pamphlet has been developed in support of the Reducing Maternal and Child Mortality through Strengthening Primary Health Care in South Africa Programme (RMCH). The RMCH programme is implemented by GMI Futures Group in partnership with Health Systems Trust, Save the Children South Africa and Social Development Direct, with funding from UK aid from the UK Government. The views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK Government's official policies. All reasonable precautions have been taken to verify the information contained in this pamphlet.

RMCH is committed to helping reduce the high number of avoidable maternal and child deaths in South Africa by strengthening the primary health care system. The programme provides technical assistance to the South African National Department of Health (NDOH) and the Districts to improve the quality of, and access to, reproductive, maternal and child health services for women and children living in poorer, underserved areas in South Africa.

*Information taken from CARMMA 2012

- Women's Health: This includes health services aimed at general health specific to women, including reproductive health.
- Maternal Health: Maternal health refers to the health of women during pregnancy, childbirth and after delivery period. Motherhood is often a positive and fulfilling experience, for too many women it is associated with suffering, ill-health and even death.
- Approximately 50% of all maternal deaths take place in the first day after giving birth.
- 1 in 322 women die during or after pregnancy.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO BOTH MATERNAL AND WOMEN'S HEALTH TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF DEATHS:

MATERNAL MORTALITY FACTS IN SOUTH AFRICA:

Changes of good health are low for the baby, if the mother is not healthy.

HEALTH OF MOTHERS AND BABIES ARE LINKED:

Even though pregnancy is a natural process for women, good healthcare before, during and after pregnancy, is important to ensure a healthy mother and baby.

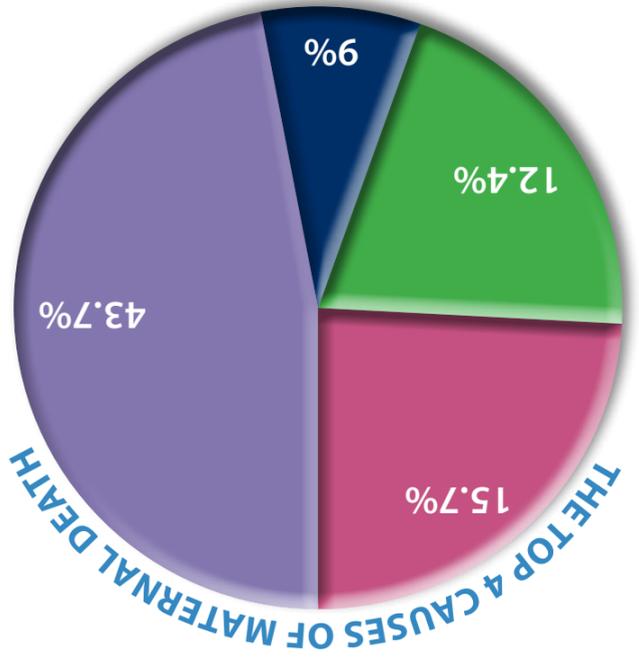
Maternal health in South Africa

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Maternal Health:
Health Rights and Responsibilities

- 1. Non-pregnancy related infections (HIV and TB)
- 2. Hypertension
- 3. Post-partum haemorrhage
- 4. Pregnancy-related sepsis



The top 4 causes of Maternal Death are: (Fourth Saving Mothers Report)

“Every person has the right to have access to health care services including reproductive health care. No person may be refused emergency treatment”
(Section 27 of the South African Constitution)

Who can you complain to if you feel your health rights are not respected?

Look for the complaints box at health care facilities (clinics, community health centers & hospitals). The procedure to lodge your complaint must be clearly displayed in every health facility.

CALL THE NATIONAL COMPLAINTS CENTRE ON 08100 20 14 14

EMERGENCY PUBLIC AMBULANCE NUMBER 10 177 (dial 112 from a mobile phone)



072-66 33 739
help@blacksash.org.za

The Black Sash HELPLINE for FREE paralegal support and advice

REMEMBER:

Public Health should take care of communities and not just individuals. Everyone benefits if the whole community is healthy. You can therefore complain as an individual AND as a community.

Free services for pregnant women available at health facilities include:



1.

CARE DURING PREGNANCY (BASIC ANTENATAL CARE):

- If pregnancy is suspected, ask for a **pregnancy test to confirm** so as to start with antenatal care or to request a termination of pregnancy (TOP).
- The first pregnancy check-up should happen as soon as possible, preferably **in the first 12 weeks**.
- **At least 4 visits** during pregnancy are recommended (7-10 visits are ideal).
- **Screening for TB**, and if necessary, TB treatment will be started.
- **Vitamin supplements** such as iron, folic acid, Vitamin A and nutritional supplements are provided.
- **Ask for information about danger signs and risk factors during pregnancy** to ensure your health and the health of your baby.



2.

PMTCT (PREVENTION OF MOTHER TO CHILD TRANSMISSION) INCLUDES:

Note: Women should not be forced into a HIV test, however it is highly recommended to ensure the safety of both you and your baby.

- **All pregnant women** will be offered information, counselling and testing for HIV in a confidential and private manner.
- **All HIV positive pregnant women will receive: Free counselling** to support living with HIV and having a healthy HIV free baby, a **CD4 test**, and will be **initiated on ART** (antiretroviral medication) immediately.
- **TB prevention medication (IPT):** Ask your health provider about this if you have been exposed to TB.
- **Information on safer sex practices and disclosure** of HIV status, and on living a healthy and positive lifestyle.

****Women who test HIV negative will be encouraged to retest later in their pregnancy, and after delivery.**



3.

DELIVERY OF THE BABY:

- **Plan and make arrangements** to deliver your baby at a health facility. This is the safest. The health provider will provide an estimated booking date.
- **Enquire around ambulance services** and maternity waiting rooms (available at some health facilities).
- **HIV positive pregnant women** need special care, alert the health provider to this information, if it is not on the clinic records.
- **Care for high-risk pregnancies** will be referred to a district hospital, e.g. Caesarean births, and more complicated conditions to the regional hospital.



4.

POST DELIVERY (POST NATAL):

- This is an important period **6 weeks after birth**, for you and your baby.
- Both will need special attention during this time, especially if the mother is HIV positive, to keep the mother healthy and **reduce the risk of passing on HIV to the baby**.
- Some important visits post delivery include: **within 24 hours** (before discharge if at health facility), **within 3 days, at 6 days and at 6 weeks** after birth are all very important.
- **Both you and your baby will be examined** at these visits. **Feeding options or questions** will be discussed again. HIV positive mothers can breastfeed but the baby would need to be tested during this time.
- New mothers (and their babies) will again be **offered an HIV test** at the 6-week visit.

Note: there are also other important follow-up and immunization visits for you and your baby thereafter as well. Keep maternal case record card safe.



5.

OTHER HEALTH SERVICES AVAILABLE TO WOMEN INCLUDE:

- **Termination of Pregnancy (TOP):** for unwanted pregnancies this procedure can be done up until 12 weeks.
- **Screening for cancer of the womb:** Any worrying and unusual signs, such as irregular bleeding, should be reported to the health provider. Ask about this screening. Pap smears (of the womb) should be done regularly, yearly if HIV positive, and once during pregnancy.
- **Ask for family planning information** and advice to ensure the health of your children.
- **Contraceptives:** There are many free options to choose from. Ask about female condoms and emergency contraceptives such as the morning-after pill.
- **Treatment and management** of sexually transmitted infections (STI's).
- **Post-rape treatment for women and children:** this needs to be taken within 72 hours of the rape.

REMEMBER:



All adolescent girls have the right to these treatments and services, and to be treated in a caring, confidential and supportive manner by health staff.

From age 14 years, adolescents may access confidential sexual and reproductive health care without parental consent.