

**Speaking Notes by Deputy Minister of Health, Dr Joe on the Department's Response to tackle the burden of NCDs in South Africa during the Healthy Life Trajectories Initiative - SAMRC Pretoria**

**Monday, 16 September 2024**

Programme Director,  
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Non-communicable diseases not only reduce life expectancy but also have a profound economic impact, straining both individuals and our healthcare system. It is crucial that we recognise the gravity of this burden which is deeply interconnected with factors such as unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, alcohol abuse, smoking and social and commercial determinants of health.

The Department of Health has prioritised addressing NCDs as a key component of our strategy. Our approach is both comprehensive and multifaceted, recognis

Our focus is not limited to the detection of diseases but also includes education on risk factors and lifestyle modifications that can prevent the progression of these conditions. The Department has recently entered into a memorandum of understanding with ParkrunSA to encourage our communities to utilise existing Parkruns and extend the establishment of parkruns to townships and villages to encourage and create an environment for people to walk, jog or run on weekends. Parkrun is

benefits of early intervention continue to protect children into adulthood.

3. Regulations relating to the reduction of sodium in certain foodstuffs and related matters to help in reducing salt intake to less than 5g per day. Excessive salt intake is associated with hypertension which is the second leading cause of the death in South Africa and hypertension is a major risk factor for CVDs.

Scientific evidence suggests that reducing sodium intake significantly reduce blood pressure and risk of cardiovascular diseases in adults particularly its contribution towards coronary artery disease and stroke. South Africa is the first country in the world to legislate salt levels to help reduce the amount of salt in processed foods.

Last year, the Minister of Health published draft regulations to improve food labelling requirements so that consumers are clear about the contents of food. These regulations include:

- (i) a model to classify healthy foods
- (ii) specifying criteria for health claims, and,
- (iii) a mandatory Front of Pack Label in the form of an easily understood logos, to assist consumers in identifying foods that exceed the threshold of added sugar, sodium, and saturated fats as they contribute to the rising obesity and non-communicable disease and death burden in South Africa.

All these regulations are crucial in curbing the rise of NCDs. However, I must indicate that we are lacking in terms of monitoring and enforcing compliance to these regulations, and we are working on improving in this regard.

As we know, addressing NCDs cannot be the work of the health sector alone. The social and commercial determinants of health—such as poverty, education, and access to clean water and access to affordable nutritious food, increased availability of cheap non nutritious food, safe environments for physical activity—play a significant role in the development of NCDs.



The Department of Health remains committed to strengthening prevention, improving access to care and treatment, to improve the health and well-being of our South Africans especially of children, our future generation. The fight against the NCDs requires all hands on deck, the govt cannot win this with the support and commitment of all sectors of the society.