



health

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MEDIA RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE PHILA! TAKE CARE DURING THE FESTIVE PERIOD

It is the time to be merry, generous and kind. But let's remember to do all what we do this festive season with caution and in moderation. With more time on our hands away from work and our studies, we are most likely to indulge in extraordinary alcohol consumption as part of our festivities.

Before you take that next sip, Phila (Government's health promotion campaign) requires you to ponder upon this for a bit: According to a 2014 study published in the South African Medical Journal, "Alcohol is the third-largest contributor to death and disability after unsafe sex/sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and interpersonal violence, both of which are themselves influenced by alcohol consumption. In total, 36 840 deaths, 787 749 years of life lost and 344 331 years lived with a disability were attributable to alcohol, which together accounted for more than 1.1 million disability-adjusted life years (DALYs), or 7% of the total disease burden". Phila emphasises the promotion of healthy lifestyles and wellness. Phila means 'to live' and to 'have life' – ukuPhila.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), South Africa has the highest number of drunk-driving accidents in the world - nearly 60% of our road deaths, including during holiday periods and weekends when there is a peak of road accidents. In addition, some 3 000 adult pedestrians are killed in motor crashes annually - 70 % of them drunk.

National figures show a surge in festive season fatalities in the last three years from 1 587 in 2014/15 to 2 006 in 2016/17. The consumption of alcohol, even in relatively small amounts, and getting behind the wheel of a vehicle or walking, increases the risk of being involved in a crash for motorists and pedestrians. Not only does alcohol impair processes critical to safe road use, such as vision and reaction time, it is also associated with poor judgement and so is often linked to other high-risk road use behaviours such as speeding or not wearing seat-belts.

Furthermore, alcohol use often leads to high-risk sexual behaviour, increasing unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. "When you drink or take drugs, you are much less likely to think preventatively about safe sex. Alcohol and drugs lower your inhibitions, which can make it easier to be sexual. This may feel great in the moment, but the next day the regrets could come flooding in. Phila encourages you to stay sober so you can have safer sex every time and never wake up with regrets", Health Minister, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, advises.

"The number of new HIV infections is still extremely high, particularly among young women and girls. More than 2 300 girls and young women between the ages of 15 and 24 become infected with HIV each week. The number could be higher during festive periods. I urge every South African – boy, girl, man and woman to be responsible and to take the necessary precautions", Motsoaledi adds.

And this is how you can take care of yourself:

1. Use condoms every time you have sex with anyone, even if it's just oral sex.
2. Limit the number of people you have sex with. The safest sex is with one partner who has sex only with you.

3. Ask your potential sex partners about their sexual history. Encourage your sexual partner to get tested together. Either way, you should still use a condom.
4. Enjoy safer sex by ensuring that you reduce alcohol and drug intake before having sex.

About Phila

Phila is a Government campaign that promotes a holistic approach to wellness, which begins with a positive health attitude, and ends in a long and healthy life for all.

The campaign encourages knowing one's health status, increased physical activity, healthier eating, adherence to treatment, good sexual health and a safe, violence-free society.

This is a government response to the urgent health challenges faced by all South Africans, such as diabetes, obesity, hypertension, heart disease, lack of exercise, smoking, excessive drinking and unsafe sexual practices. These challenges have contributed to four epidemics that currently prevail at the same time, these are Non-Communicable Diseases, HIV and AIDS, TB, Violence Injury and Trauma, Mother-Child-Woman Health.

Phila Sub-campaigns

Phila houses a number of sub-campaigns that promote various areas of healthcare. These are: She Conquers - a national campaign aimed at empowering adolescent girls and young women to reach their potential and maximise their contribution in a democratic South Africa. MAX condoms - scented male condoms, available in banana, strawberry and grape scents, that freely available at public health facilities across the country. Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision (VMMC) – a programme by the National Department of Health which set a target of over four million medical male circumcisions in South Africa by 2016. Tuberculosis (TB) campaign – a national campaign aimed at tackling the TB pandemic, which is second only to HIV/AIDS as the greatest killer worldwide due to a single infectious agent.

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