



momconnect

Frequently Asked Questions

For Healthcare Professionals at Clinics



General Questions

What is the National Department of Health Pregnancy Registry?

The NDOH is creating a national pregnancy registry. The aim of the registration of pregnant mothers to a central database is to provide them with valuable services which will improve maternal Health Indicators and to provide better statistical data with which to inform Governmental decisions around maternal health.

What is MomConnect?

MomConnect is the brand name given to the National Department of Health Pregnancy Registry. This name was previously used with a similar project in KZN involving the KZN Department of Health, Unicef, Virtual Purple and Praekelt Foundation.

How much does it cost to sign up?

It is completely free to sign up. Mothers will not be charged for the call to the USSD code (eg *134*550*2#) or for the messages that they will receive.

How much does it cost to receive the SMSs?

Mothers will not be charged anything to receive the messages. This service is free and will remain free.

Who is involved in the project?

There are many organisations involved in this project. These range from technical partners, to clinical implementation partners, funders and Mobile Network Operators as well as the clinic staff and Community Healthcare Workers. A complete list of these partners has not yet been finalised.

Does the mother have to belong to a certain mobile network to get the messages?

No. The mother will receive free messages no matter what network you belong to.

How long will the mother receive messages for?

The mother can sign up from 5 weeks of gestation and she will receive messages until her baby is 1 year old.

How will the impact of the service be measured?

The impact of the programme will be defined by key national maternal and child health indicators. These are specific to antenatal attendance, immunisations, mother and infant HIV testing with a particular focus on the 18 month PCR test as well as measures of behaviour change through

pre and post knowledge assessments. Process measures re the performance of the registry and support services will also be collected.

What is the difference between the messages a mother will get when she signs up herself, or through a CHW, or at a clinic?

If a mother signs up by herself through the *134*550# USSD code or a Community Health Worker signs her up through the *134*550*3# USSD code they will receive a set of 6 messages. These messages will tell the mother more about MomConnect and encourage her to go to the nearest clinic to sign up for the full set of messages. This full set of messages comprises of approximately 150 messages and the mother will receive between 2 and 3 messages per week. These messages are also stage based so that the mother will get information that is relevant to the stage of their pregnancy.

Is the mother's information safe?

Yes. The mother's information does not stay on the phone that she is using to register and is then sent to a secure database housed at the National Department of Health. This information is only used to improve health services and will not be shared with others.

Signing Mothers Up

At what point in the clinic process do we sign mothers up to the messages?

This is dependent on the situation at your clinic, however we have developed a number of options based on our knowledge of workflows at various clinics which will help to guide you when implementing this. Its important to remember that in order for a mother to be signed up she must have her pregnancy confirmed and an estimated due date.

Option 1:

In this scenario, mothers are first gathered together for their health education classes. These will usually be run by Health Promoters. At this stage it would be good to start to educate the mothers about the MomConnect Project, what it is and how they will sign up. The mother will then go into her consultation with the nurse and when she is in her consultation, the nurse should ask whether the mother would like to sign up to MomConnect. The mother's choice to sign up or not sign up should be recorded on her file by the nurse along with her EDD. When the mother hands her file back to the Data Capturer, the Data Capturer will then register the mother through the *134*550*2# code if she has decided to join the programme.

Option 2:

In this scenario, mothers are again gathered for their health education classes and at this point the Health Promoters educate the mothers about the MomConnect programme. However, once the consultation with the nurse is done, the file is left in the consultation room and the mother leaves the clinic without taking her file back to the data capturer. In this case the nurse should bath ask the mother if she wants to be part of the programme, and sign the mother up through the *134*550*2# code before she leaves the consultation. This should also be noted in the clinic file so that during future visits the mother is not asked to register again.

Option 3:

If no health education classes are offered and there is therefore no opportunity to talk to the mothers as a group about the MomConnect programme, it is suggested that a clinic staff member is tasked with handing out the informational fliers to mothers while they wait for their consultation. Then, in their consultation, the nurses will need to talk to the mother about the programme. The nurse can then sign the mother up through the *134*550*2# code or a data capturer can do this when the mother returns her file.

What happens if the mother does not want to get messages?

This is not a compulsory service and should the mother not want to sign up for messages she does not have to. However we suggest that you encourage mothers to sign up as this is a very valuable service for her and it will help you in the future too because the mother will be less likely to come to the clinic unnecessarily and will be able to make healthier choices during her pregnancy.

Who must sign up the mother?

Its important that a clinic employee signs the mother up because they will have received training on the process and will have access to information such as the EDD. However, this person can be a nurse, a data capturer, a health promoter or even a volunteer. The important thing is that the mother consents to being signed up, is confirmed as being pregnant by a nurse and that the nurse has given an estimated due date.

Who's phone do I need to use to sign up a mother?

You can use any phone to register a mother. This can be your own phone, a phone at the facility, the mother's phone or another patient's phone. Remember that you do not need airtime to use this service as it is completely free.

What happens if a mother has signed up through the CHW or Public line and then comes to the clinic?

The mother should be registered through the clinic USSD code (*134*550*2#) to start to receive the full set of messages for pregnancy. If they do not register through this code they will not receive these messages.

When can we start signing mothers up?

The launch date of this service has not yet been confirmed. You will be notified when the service is launched.

Why do mothers have to give their ID or passport number?

Mothers do not have to give their ID or Passport number if they do not wish to, however this allows us to know who they are so that if their information changes, we can identify them. This will also assist when they move between clinics and in the future will allow the National Department of Health to provide them with better service.

What happens if the mother does not have an ID or passport?

Mothers can still receive messages even if they do not have an ID or Passport.

What happens if there is no phone available or there is no signal at the clinic?

If there is no signal at the clinic or there is no phone available, the mother can be signed up to the programme using the paper based form that is provided for this purpose. In this event, the person at the clinic who would normally do the registration through the phone will be responsible for completing the paper based form. This information will be captured at the end of the day by someone identified by the facility manager in a computer identified for this purpose. This information will then be collected by the District manager and sent to the Provincial Office and from there to the National Department cc the MCH coordinator.

What happens if the mother is not literate?

In the future we plan to develop a service that will cater for illiterate mothers, however at this point we can only deliver text messages. Please encourage the mother to get a literate friend to read her the messages until such time as a service for the illiterate is developed.

After Signing Up

How can the mother start getting messages about her baby now that she has given birth?

The messaging will automatically switch over to messages about her baby when the mother is 42 weeks pregnant. However in order to ensure that the messaging can start getting messages

about her baby when she gives birth, we suggest that the mother triggers the baby messages when she gives birth. This can be done by replying to any of the MomConnect messages that she has received with the word “Baby”.

What happens if the mother has a miscarriage or stillbirth?

If the mother wants to stop receiving messages for any reason including miscarriage or stillbirth, she can dial the opt-out code *134*550*1#. If she has had a miscarriage or stillbirth she can also choose to get a set of messages to support her through this time when she goes through this process.

What happens if the registered mother moves between clinics or attends another clinic after signing up somewhere else?

They will continue to receive messages and will not need to sign up again.

What happens if we want to update information about the mother? (eg change of EDD or change of phone number)

In the future we will make it possible to easily update a patient’s information, however currently if a mother wants to change anything (eg language, cell number or EDD) then they need to re-register. If the mother inputs her ID or Passport number it helps us to make this re-registry more effective.

What happens if the mother loses her phone or gets a new phone number?

It is important to remember that the messages are linked to the phone number (SIM Card) and not the phone. If a mother loses her phone she has 2 options:

1. She can get a sim swap through her mobile service provider so that she transfers her number to a new sim card. This will mean that she will still get the messages as usual and she will not need to do anything.
2. If she gets a new phone number she can re-register to receive messages on her new number. This will entail going through the full registration process at the clinic again.

How does the mother stop receiving messages?

If a mother wants to stop receiving messages she must dial *134*550*1#. She will be asked for her reason for opting out and will stop receiving messages. If she has suffered a miscarriage, stillbirth or death of a baby she can also choose to get messages to help support her through this time at this point.

Who’s phone do I need to use if I want to opt a mother out or change their messages to the baby messages now that they have given birth?

The mother must use her own phone to opt out of messaging or to change over to baby messages.

What happens if the mother wants the messages in another language?

We currently offer messages in English, Afrikaans, Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho and Setswana. The service will be offered in all 11 languages in the future however these are not available as yet. If a mother wants to change the language she is receiving the messages in, she will have to go to the clinic and re-register through the *134*550*2# number.

Beyond the SMSs

How can a mother get more information about her pregnancy or baby?

She can dial the free number *134*550# to access baby and pregnancy information. This is available to all mothers, even those who have not registered through the clinic.

How can a mother rate the service she received at the clinic?

Once a mother has registered at the clinic she will receive an SMS that explains how she can rate the service she has received.

How can a mother log a complaint about the service?

The mother can dial the free number *134*550# to log a complaint. This is only available to mothers who have registered through a clinic.

How can a mother give a compliment about the service?

The mother can dial the free number *134*550# to log a compliment. This is only available to mothers who have registered through a clinic.

What are the future plans for the project?

Future plans for the project include:

- Messages available in all 11 official languages
- A voice programme for those who are illiterate
- The ability to register through other channels such as fieldworker applications and Mxit

