

SASTM NEWSFLASH

HEALTH DEPT: NO NEED TO PANIC OVER LISTERIA OUTBREAK

JOHANNESBURG - The Gauteng Health Department is appealing for calm after confirmation that a woman has died of [listeriosis](#) in the province, bringing the national death toll to 37.

The pregnant woman died at the weekend after she was admitted to the Steve Biko Academic hospital in Pretoria.

Last week, Health Minister Aaron Motsoaledi announced the listeriosis outbreak, with over 500 confirmed cases.

Motsoaledi said while the outbreak is serious, Listeria is treatable and preventable.

The department's Chika Asomugha said: "Of course they should be concerned but not any panic. It is not a contagious disease that you get by touching people. Basic hygiene like the washing of hands before food and after going to the toilet, washing of vegetables and fruits before eating them."

Listeriosis is a serious, but treatable and preventable disease caused by the bacterium, *listeria monocytogenes*. It is widely distributed in nature and can be found in soil, water and vegetation.

Animal products and fresh produce such as fruits and vegetables can be contaminated from these sources.

The Health Department has listed the following symptoms:

- Flu-like illness with diarrhoea including fever, general body pains, vomiting and weakness.
- Infection of the bloodstream which is called septicaemia.
- Meningoencephalitis (infection of the brain).

Individuals at high risk of developing severe disease include new born babies, the elderly, pregnant women, persons with weak immunity such as HIV, diabetes, cancer, chronic liver or kidney disease.

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South African Society of Travel Medicine (SASTM)

Phone: +27 (011) 025 3297

Fax: +27 087 9411350 / 1

E-mail: admin@sastm.org.za

Website: www.sastm.org.za

Postal address: SASTM, PO Box 8216, Greenstone, 1616, South Africa

Physical address: SASTM, 27 Linksfield Road Block 2 a Dunvegan Edenvale

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