

Antenatal care essential for protecting the health of women and their unborn children

Since April 2022 to date, 1238 stillbirths have been recorded in the province - many of which could have possibly been averted if risks were picked up early in pregnancy.



Source: [Pexels](#)

The Western Cape Department of Health's goal is to drastically reduce these deaths by raising awareness of the importance of making early pregnancy appointments so that health workers can work with mothers in ensuring a safe pregnancy and birth.

"There are many things that could go wrong during any pregnancy, which is why early and regular visits to a clinic is so important. Many issues might impact on the growth of a baby while in the womb. If these risks are picked up early in pregnancy it can be managed to ensure the safety of the mother and the healthy birth of the baby. Antenatal care is essential for protecting the health of women and their unborn children.

"We encourage women to speak to us as soon as they think they may be pregnant or have done a home pregnancy test that indicates they may be pregnant. Ideally their first clinic visit needs to happen at 14 weeks," a spokesperson for the department said.

The Western Cape Department of Health places significant emphasis on the first 1,000 days of a child's life. This refers to a child's life from the moment that they are conceived until they reach two years of age (24 months). This is a time when their brain, body and immune system grows and develops significantly. Booking antenatal care early significantly reduces the risk to both mother and baby.

Women who do not receive the necessary check-ups miss the opportunity to detect complications and receive appropriate care and treatment. This also includes immunisations and prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/Aids.

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