

Pesticide & Agricultural stock Remedies Poisoning



Background Information



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Introduction and background



October 2024 - Naledi incident, 6 children died from acute organophosphate poisoning.



Exposure pathway unclear – suspected contaminated food from local spaza shops.



Terbufos residues found on packet of crisps, but source not confirmed.



Urban misuse: residents use agricultural pesticides for pest control due to poor waste management.



Illegal sales: pesticides sold in informal markets and spaza shops in townships.



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Key Statistics



- 375 deaths from Terbufos exposure between 2023–2024.
- Many victims, especially children, die before reaching a health facility.
- 1400+ severe poisonings/year from cholinergic pesticides (NHLS data, past 5 years)
- 453 cases of pesticide poisoning in children under 12 (2025, Notifiable Medical Conditions system)
- Children poisoned by pesticides are:
 - ✓ 10× more likely to need ICU care;
 - ✓ 14× more likely to die in hospital (Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital data)
- Foodstuffs, inhalation and skin contact are predominantly a mode of pesticide poisoning..



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National response



- The National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure (NATJOINTS) activated - coordinate a multi-sectoral response.
- 15 November 2024 – President announced key intervention measures aimed at protecting South Africans, particularly children from foodborne and chemical-related illnesses. The measures announced included:
 - ✓ The urgent removal of hazardous pesticides from public circulation.
 - ✓ Strengthening efforts to protect children from exposure to these substances.
 - ✓ Ensure that all deaths of children under 12 are notified.
- On 18 November 2024 -foodborne illnesses classified as a National Disaster in terms of Section 23 of the Disaster Management Act.
- Minister of Health appointed MAC on foodborne illnesses.

Response



- Agricultural or stock remedies poisonings - Notifiable medical conditions under the “Regulations relating to the Surveillance & the Control of Notifiable Medical Conditions” of 2017.
- In 2025 - Minister amended the NMC Regulations for Agricultural or Stock Remedy poisoning from Category 2 to Category 1 (notified within 24 hours).
- Cabinet decision to ban pesticides – after MAC recommendation.



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What is needed



- Strengthening surveillance and healthcare response.
- Early diagnosis of signs and symptoms by Clinicians.
- Facilitating education and awareness campaigns at household level.



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Conclusion



- Future generations will be protected from suffering from severe neurological damage and developmental problems.



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Thank you !



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