

## SMS service for pregnant women

A new cellphone application, MomConnect, allows all pregnant women in the country to sign up for a free SMS service, which provides information and advice on pregnancy, and can be used to notify the Department of Health about poor services at clinics.



A free SMS service for pregnant mothers has been launched by the Department of Health using funding from the US Government and Johnson & Johnson.

Image: [PC Tech Magazine](#)

Health Minister, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi said the messages will advise women about what they should do during their pregnancy and encourage women to start ante-natal classes and care early.

"We will say mom, since you registered with us you are now 13-weeks pregnant. This is what you must do, this is where you must go and this is what you must avoid. Even after the birth of the baby, we will continue to send the messages for at least a year. to monitor progress of the mother and child," he said.

He said pregnant mothers will also be able to send messages to the Department of Health and complain or compliment the services received at healthcare facilities.

"This will allow us to monitor our clinics and take corrective action if any clinics are providing adequate services," he added.

### More than 10,000 workers trained

In preparation for the launch of MomConnect, the department with the help of its development partners has trained 10,300 health workers nationally to assist pregnant women.

"In the coming weeks, every health facility in the country will have at least one person who is trained and whose job it is to assist and register pregnant women," the Minister said.

The project will be funded for the next two years by partners including the US Government, which has donated R49m to it and Johnson & Johnson, which donated R5m. The country will only start funding the project from its fiscus after two years.

Four cellphone operators including Vodacom, MTN, Cell C and Telkom Mobile are offering a 50% discount on SMS calls sent to pregnant mothers.

Pregnant mothers and health workers at the Motubatse Clinic have welcomed the initiative, saying it will save lives.

Pregnant mother Patricia Mokeke: "As mothers we have a lot on our mind at home and work, and sometimes we forget to go to the clinics on time. The project will help us especially when something you don't understand happens to you during the pregnancy. We can send a message for assistance," said Mokeke, who is expecting her second child.

Sister Innocentia Hlongwane, who works at the mother and child ward in the clinic, said MomConnect will help expectant mothers to book appointments early and provide them with information ahead of time.

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