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To: Deputy Directors-General, Chief Directors, Directors and Deputy Directors (Head Office and district offices), Heads: Management and Governance, Circuit Managers, Chief Education Specialists, Deputy Chief Education Specialists, Heads of educational institutions and independent schools

Short summary: *This circular intends to create an awareness regarding Listeriosis. It provides some advice and cautions against practices that may create the conditions for Listeriosis.*

Subject: Risks of the Listeriosis outbreak: some important considerations

1. You may have heard that the source of the Listeriosis outbreak has been traced to an Enterprise food production facility in Polokwane and a Rainbow chicken processing plant in Germiston, as announced on Sunday by the National Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi. As it stands, and as announced by the Western Cape Minister of Health, Dr Nomafrench Mbombo, the Western Cape has 115 confirmed cases reported to the provincial Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for the years 2017 and 2018. A total of 88 of these cases (77 percent) are from various areas within the Cape Metro, and 29 deaths (25 percent) have been reported to date.
2. We are cautioning beneficiaries of the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) and all other schools that Listeriosis must be taken very seriously given the number of fatalities that have occurred thus far.
3. We advise schools to encourage children and staff to avoid all processed meat products that are sold as ready-to-eat. While we know that polony is definitely implicated, there is a risk of cross-contamination of other ready-to-eat processed meat products, either at production, distribution or retail. This is because the Listeria bacterium (that causes

Listeriosis) on the exterior casing (packaging) of polony can be transferred to other products it comes into contact with, including viennas, russians, frankfurters, other sausages and other cold meat products that are typically not cooked before eating. Just a reminder that people at high risk for Listeriosis include:

- 3.1 Pregnant women
 - 3.2 Neonates (first 28 days of life)
 - 3.3 Very young infants
 - 3.4 Elderly persons over 65 years of age
 - 3.5 Anyone with a weakened immune system (due to HIV infection, cancer, diabetes, kidney disease, liver disease, people with transplants and those on immunosuppressive therapy such as oral corticosteroids, chemotherapy or anti-TNF therapy for auto-immune disease)
4. In view of the above it is pivotal that food preparation in school kitchens is monitored at all times. It is equally important to exercise caution when buying food from merchants selling food near schools. Critically, hygiene laws that relate to hand washing before eating and after visiting toilets are of utmost importance, as well as keeping raw and cooked meat separate from other foods. Please note the following general recommendations:
- 4.1 Thoroughly cook raw food from animal sources, such as beef, pork or poultry.
 - 4.2 Wash raw vegetables thoroughly (scrub with a clean produce brush in uncontaminated running water) before eating.
 - 4.3 Keep uncooked meats separate from vegetables and from cooked foods and ready-to-eat foods.
 - 4.4 Avoid unpasteurised (raw) milk or foods made from unpasteurised milk.
 - 4.5 Wash hands, knives and cutting boards after handling uncooked foods.
 - 4.6 Consume perishable and ready-to-eat foods as soon as possible.
5. It must be noted that peanut butter remains one of the cheapest and safest protein options and its ingredients have a very long shelf life.
6. We look forward to your cooperation in this matter and strongly urge you to contact a school nurse or a medical professional in the event of any challenges you experience.

SIGNED: BK SCHREUDER
HEAD: EDUCATION
DATE: 2018-03-06