

Nutrition

Good nutrition is essential for good health. HOPE Cape Town recognises that it is important to address this need where we are able to. We have a community food garden, as well as a nutrition and feeding programme run from the HOPE Community Centre in Blikkiesdorp. We also provide supplementary food for caregivers in Tygerberg Hospital wards as well as food packs for those in need when they are discharged. As breastfeeding is a very important source of nutrition, HOPE Cape Town supports the baby-friendly hospital breastfeeding initiative.

Having access to healthy, adequate nutrition is essential for good mental and physical health. Children that have not had a good meal will struggle to drink medication, struggle to concentrate at school and stay physically healthy. Being hungry also affects your mood and behaviour.

Our nutrition programme consists of two components. The first is our Blikkiesdorp outreach programme, and the second is our outreach programme targeting in-patients at Tygerberg hospital and their caregivers.

Blikkiesdorp

Our site in Blikkiesdorp contains a food garden. Despite the challenging soil and conditions, we are able to grow a significant amount of fruit and vegetables in the space surrounding the containers. This garden is maintained by the HCHW situated there, but community members are also encouraged to assist and learn in the garden.

Once a week, some community ladies from Blikkiesdorp prepare a meal for children and the elderly in the community. They use crops from the garden as well as donated dry food. Recipients of food are encouraged to take ownership of the programme and to engage with the HOPE projects by helping in the garden, assisting with cooking, and keeping the area clean. This provides a situation where knowledge of healthy food and cooking can be shared – as well as providing peer support and friendship for community members. They are also invited to gain skills with HOPE's beading project.

In 2015 we gave out meals to 1634 children and 2427 adults. In a special celebration of Mandela day 2015 we gave breakfast to a further 600 children.

HOPE to Home at the Tygerberg Hospital

Our HOPE to Home office receives donations of bread, fruit, tea and coffee – and occasionally other meals - that are distributed within the wards. These meals primarily go to mothers of patients who may have missed the meal handed out by the hospital, or who are not satiated by the small size of the meal. We hand out 300 meals per month on average. Furthermore we also hand out food parcels to selected mothers upon discharge to assist with their transition home after a long stay in hospital. These donations form an integral part of the relationship and trust building between our HCHW's and the caregivers, which allows our HCHW's the opportunity to counsel and educate them about health and HIV.

Breastfeeding

As of 2014 the South African government no longer provides free formula as part of the PMTCT program (Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV). Instead mothers are encouraged to breastfeed exclusively. Children who are breastfed have less severe gastroenteritis and pneumonia. However, there is a potential risk that a child may become infected with HIV during this time. It is therefore imperative that HIV positive breastfeeding mothers are given the education and support they need to ensure that breastfeeding is safe and that mother-to-child transmission does not take place. Our HCWs have received training on how to counsel mothers about breastfeeding, and how to advise on safety within the hospital and the communities they serve.