# NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION NO. 1004**

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**(INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO. 18)**

**Ms M D Hlengwa (IFP) to ask the Minister of Health:**

Whether, in light of the fact that the multinational corporation Johnson and Johnson will stop selling talc-based baby powder in the United States and Canada after paying out billions of dollars in lost legal battles over claims that the product causes cancer, talc-based baby powder will continue to be sold in the Republic; if so, (a) why and (b) what are the full relevant details?

###### NW1293E

**REPLY:**

# The View of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Prevention and Control of Cancer

1. The Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Prevention and Control of Cancer (MACC) sees no reason to withdraw the Johnson and Johnson talc-based baby powder from the South African market as long as it is asbestos free.
2. The relevant details are as follows:
3. Talcum powder is made from a substance called talc whose components are magnesium, silicon and oxygen.
4. Talcum powder is used in cosmetic products such as baby powder, adult body and facial powders, as well as in a number of other consumer products
5. In its natural form some talc contains asbestos which is known to cause cancer and it was linked to ovarian cancer in 1958.
6. Globally, guidelines inform that all cosmetic products which contained talc in them had to be free from detectable amounts of asbestos.
7. Johnson and Johnson’s talc powder is no longer being used in the USA following a class action court case where Johnson and Johnson were ordered to pay billions of dollars’ compensation to women with ovarian and other genitourinary cancers allegedly caused by the use of talc powder on their genitalia. Although this judgement went against Johnson and Johnson, the evidence that talc powder is carcinogenic is very limited as confirmed by the National Cancer Institute.
8. Talcum powder used to contain asbestos which is a known carcinogen but is no longer the case

END.