



FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS about the COVID-19 pandemic

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What are Coronaviruses? Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause respiratory illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). Coronaviruses are zoonotic, meaning they are transmitted between animals and people.

What is COVID-19? COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. COVID-19 was identified as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness first detected in Wuhan, China.

What are the symptoms? Symptoms can include fever, cough and shortness of breath. Symptoms may appear in as little as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure.

Should I panic? No. There is no need to panic. 82% of COVID-19 cases are mild; patients only experience a slight fever, fatigue and a cough. Only about 6% of patients need intensive care. The vast majority of people can stay at home and get better without hospital treatment, by following the self-quarantine guidelines below.

How it is spread? While the first cases probably involved exposure to an animal source, the virus now seems to be spreading from person-to-person.

Human coronaviruses most commonly spread from an infected person to others through:

- Droplets from someone that is coughing and sneezing.
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands.
- Touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands.

What are the prevention measures? There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 disease. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus. The following can provide protection against infection from Coronaviruses and many other viruses that are more common in South Africa:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Maintain social distancing – maintain at least 1 metre distance between yourself and other people, particularly those who are coughing, sneezing and have a fever.
- Limit outings and activities as far as possible where other people will be present. You can contract COVID-19 from people who are asymptomatic i.e. are not showing any symptoms.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a flexed elbow or a tissue, then throw the tissue in the bin.
- Clean and disinfect frequently-touched objects and surfaces.
- Maintain a good diet to boost your immune system.

Who is most at risk of contracting COVID-19?

COVID-19 is already present in South Africa and the number of cases are growing daily – as such anyone who comes into contact with the virus, both locally and internationally is at risk. Travelers to high-risk countries do face a higher risk of contracting the infection. Furthermore, the elderly, individuals with co-morbidities and healthcare workers have been found to be at a higher risk of death due to the infection.

How is COVID-19 treated?

To date, there is no specific antiviral treatment available. Antibiotics do not treat viral infections. However, antibiotics may be required if a bacterial secondary infection develops. Treatment is supportive (providing oxygen for patients with shortness of breath or treating a fever, for example). People that have uncomplicated COVID-19 infections must follow the **self-quarantine** guidelines below.

What should I do if I suspect I have COVID-19? Stay at home. If you suspect you have contracted COVID-19 it is important that you do not visit your doctor, hospital or clinic or any place where you could possibly pass the infection on to anyone else. **Phone the Official Toll Free Call Center at 0800 029 999, who will advise on your next course of action, be it self-quarantine or testing.** Suspected cases will be managed at designated hospitals with isolation facilities. Protocols are in place for follow up of case contacts to ensure that the virus does not spread.

What should I do if I, or someone in my family, is diagnosed with COVID-19?

Stay at home when you are sick and try and keep a distance from others at home. It is important that you follow the guidelines for **self-quarantine** below. It is important that you stay at home even if you don't feel sick.

What should I do if I am not sick?

Every effort is needed to contain the virus and slow the spread, and consequently save lives. This means that every South African citizen has the responsibility to ensure that they limit their contact with other people as much as possible in order to stop the virus from being spread.

Can I still travel?

The South African government has discouraged all non-essential international and local travel, and advised that travelers from high-risk countries will not be allowed to enter the country. Anyone who has travelled to high-risk countries before the entry ban should **self-quarantine**, as per the guidelines below.

What does it mean to self-quarantine?

Self-quarantine for COVID-19 is recommended for individuals who have been directly exposed to the virus or who have traveled to areas where there are large numbers of people infected in order to prevent further transmission.

Self-quarantine steps:

- Stay home. Only go out if you need medical care.
- Monitor your symptoms: Fever, cough, shortness of breath
- Get medical attention as soon as possible if you become ill - **phone the Official Toll Free Call Centre at 0800 029 999, who will advise on your next course of action, be it continued self-quarantine or testing.**

Self-quarantine practices:

- Do not go to work, school, or public areas. Avoid using public transportation, or taxis.
- Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home. If you can, use a separate bathroom.
- Facemasks should be used to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. Cough or sneeze into the fold of your elbow. Alternatively, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Clean your hands often. With soap and water for at least 20 seconds or with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60-95% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Clean surfaces like counters, table tops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables every day.

COVID-19 Testing/ Medical Care:

If you are requested to go for COVID-19 make sure you know, and follow, the steps to seeking medical care.

- Call your healthcare facility and tell them that you have, or are being evaluated for COVID-19, and that you will be visiting the facility.
- Put on a facemask before you enter the healthcare facility.
- Ask your healthcare professional to inform the NICD (National Institute for Communicable Diseases)

Where can I keep up to date with COVID-19 news?

Official WhatsApp Help Service -Send HI to **0600 123 456** on WhatsApp.

South African Government Official site – www.coronavirus.co.za