

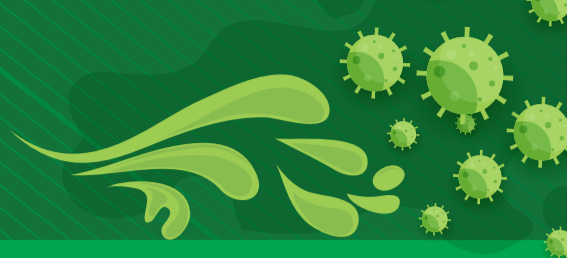


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MEC FOR HEALTH

# It's in our hands to work together to stop the spread.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

# ABOUT COVID-19



## What is Coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are large groups of viruses that are common amongst animals. These viruses can make people sick, usually with a mild to moderate upper respiratory tract illness, similar to flu. A new coronavirus called Covid-19 was identified in China and is associated with an outbreak of viral pneumonia.

## What is COVID-19?

Covid-19 is the new infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.

## Is there a vaccine, drug or treatment for COVID-19?

Not yet. To date, there is no vaccine and no specific antiviral medicine to prevent or treat Covid-19.

## What are the symptoms?

Mild to severe respiratory illness with: fever, cough – usually dry, fatigue, myalgia (sore muscles/ body), difficulty breathing. Note that a sore throat and runny nose tend to be less common in Covid-19 than in flu or other upper respiratory tract infections.

## How does COVID-19 spread?

The Covid-19 spreads mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets are then transferred through close personal contact such as touching or shaking hands, or touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands. Because the virus is spread through the droplets it is important to stay more than 1,5 - 2 meters away from a person who is sick.

## Who is at greatest risk for severe disease from COVID-19?

Some members of our community are more vulnerable to Covid-19. People who are: Older than 60 years, Overweight, Unfit, Multiple medical conditions, Medical conditions not well controlled, and the people who have the following comorbidities: Hypertension, Diabetes, Chronic kidney, heart and lung disease, Cancer, HIV, TB, obesity and other chronic medical conditions appear to develop serious illness more often than others.

## How long does the COVID-19 virus survive on the surfaces?

It is not certain how long the virus that causes Covid-19 survives on surfaces, but it seems to behave like other coronaviruses. Studies suggest that coronaviruses may persist on surfaces for a few hours or up to several days. This may vary under different conditions (e.g. type of surface, temperature or humidity of the environment).

If you think a surface may be infected, clean it with simple disinfectant to kill the virus and protect yourself and others. Clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose.

## What must I do if I suspect I have COVID-19?

### How do I get screened or tested? and how much does it cost?

It's important to seek care in a way that prevents you from spreading Covid-19 to others:

If you have access to private healthcare call your general doctor. Testing done in private is by private laboratories following a referral by your healthcare provider. It's difficult to know exactly how much these cost as each lab may charge own rates. These may cost around R900 to R1000.

You can also call NICD Hotline on 0800 029 999 or the Provincial Hotline on 033 846 6000. Explain your symptoms, or with whom you have had contact. You will receive advice on what to do. If you are unable to make a call, go to your local facility. You can get tested at government facilities for free but please note that not everyone requires testing.

Each public healthcare facility can screen all individuals coming through their doors and all persons that meet the criteria for testing are directed for testing within that facility. These are only people who exhibit symptoms for COVID-19. These are fever, cough, sore throat, myalgia/arthralgia, loss of taste, loss of smell.

This list of signs and symptoms is evolving with the evolving understanding of the COVID-19 virus. Please note that being a contact doesn't automatically qualify one for testing. You have to be monitored for 10 days from the last day of contact with a known infected person. Only if you start having sign and/or symptoms within this time of observation do you get tested. If you test too early, before having symptoms, you are likely to get a false negative result.

The most effective ways to protect yourself and your loved ones against Covid-19 are to stay at home, frequently wash your hands, cover your cough with the bend of elbow or tissue and maintain a distance of at least 1-2 meters from people who are coughing or sneezing.

## What happens when I call NICD Hotline?

The NICD Hotline 0800 029 999 is there only to advise. You will still need to go to your local healthcare service provider for further screening and testing if warranted. NICD will be able to advise after the screening of the steps that you will need to take.

## Where can I get tested for COVID-19?

COVID-19 testing is done at all government healthcare facilities i.e. PHC clinics, CHC's and hospitals. You do not need to make an appointment to go and test. You present at the healthcare facility for screening to establish if testing is warranted. If so (based on current NICD guidelines), the clinic will inform you and then test you.

It is not necessary to make an appointment or to notify your healthcare facility before going to the clinic as all patients are screened at the entrance and directed accordingly if testing is warranted. Therefore, there is already practicing of physical distancing, hand washing, cloth masks for everyone because as a country, we are now treating everyone as if they have COVID-19 because we now know that a lot of people will be infected without showing any symptoms.

## Who organises transport to quarantine and isolation facilities?

Where possible it is recommended that individuals use own transport. The DOH does provide transport for transporting of COVID-19 positive persons to isolation or quarantine facilities. However, due to limited resources, this may not always be possible in certain circumstances. Your local healthcare facility or members of the contact tracing team will advise you accordingly.

## Which categories of healthcare workers are authorised to conduct a COVID-19 test?

A trained nurse and all doctors are authorised to take swabs for COVID-19 testing.

## How can I follow up on my results if they are not forthcoming?

If you have tested, this means that you might be infected. You would have been advised to self-quarantine at home or if this was not possible, you would have been admitted into one of the state quarantine sites. It is important that while you wait for the results, you remain in quarantine conditions for 10 days. If your results do not come back and 10 days has expired, you do no longer need to be in quarantine. Due to various challenges with testing, the turn-around time for results has been longer at times. However, you may follow up with your healthcare facility for guidance as they may need to call the lab for advice on reasons for delay.

## What is an incubation period for COVID-19 and how long is it?

The "incubation period" means the time between catching the virus and beginning to have symptoms of the disease. Most estimates of the incubation period for Covid-19 range from 1-14 days, most commonly around five days.

## What happens if I test positive?

If you test positive, a member from the DOH contact tracing team will call you to establish who your contacts are and whether you can isolate at home. If it is established that you cannot, they will facilitate your referral to a government isolation facility or get you the necessary support. Where possible it is recommended that individuals use own transport. The DOH does provide transport for transporting of COVID-19 positive persons to isolation or quarantine facilities. However, due to limited resources, this may not always be possible in certain circumstances. Your local healthcare facility or members of the contact tracing team will advise you accordingly.

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If you think a surface may be infected, clean it with simple disinfectant to kill the virus and protect yourself and others. Clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose.

## Can I breast feed if I have COVID-19?

There is currently no clinical evidence to suggest that the virus can be transmitted through breast milk. Infection can be spread to the baby in the same way as to anyone in close contact with you. The benefits of breastfeeding outweigh any potential risks of transmission of the virus through breast milk or by being in close contact with your child.

If you wish to breastfeed, take precautions to limit the potential spread of Covid-19 to the baby by:

- washing your hands before touching the baby, breast pump or bottles
- avoiding coughing or sneezing on the baby while feeding at the breast
- cleaning any breast pump as recommended by the manufacturer after each use
- considering asking someone who is well to feed your expressed breast milk to the baby.

If you are feeding with formula or expressed milk, sterilise the equipment carefully before each use. You should not share bottles or a breast pump with someone else.

## What is a quarantine site?

If you are a contact or a COVID 19 suspect, you will be tested, whilst waiting for your results you are expected to self-quarantine at home. But if the situation at home does not allow you to self-quarantine you can then quarantine in the government facility known as quarantine sites.

We need to remember that being in quarantine doesn't mean that you are infected but that you have been exposed. While in quarantine there are strict infection prevention and control measures in place that will prevent cross infection between patients and between patients and staff. This includes the maintenance of laundry services. On discharge, you should not be going home with contaminated clothing. Should you have such concerns you must report this to the sister in-charge of the facility.

## Who cleans the private residents (flats/complex/communal blocks) if there is a COVID-19 case?

The cleaning of private residences can be done by residents of that household using recommended methods with house bleach and water as used for cleaning of surfaces. In communal residential areas, as these are private, the management structures such as home owner associations that oversee the management of communal property must develop guidance for own residents. It's not possible to prescribe how private parties conduct decontamination, but guidance is available where guidance is needed, through local health authorities for both households and business settings.

## What to do when the worker test positive?

Guidance on what to do when a worker tests positive is available from the Department of Employment and Labour. However, local health authorities can advise and support a COVID-19 outbreak in the workplace. The priority is to send the COVID – 19 positive employees to isolation for 10 days, identify all those who were exposed and might be infected, send all those that are at risk of having been infected to quarantine for 10 days, and identify all areas that will need to be closed for decontamination. It is important that the workplace is assessed for areas that might pose a risk of COVID-19 transmission where proper Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures might have been breached. These need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

## What to do to prevent workers from transmitting COVID-19 amongst each other?

At work, on our way to work, at home, at the supermarket. We need to follow these instructions:

- a) Stay at home when we feel unwell
- b) Keep to physical distancing always
- c) Wash our hands as frequently as possible, when hands are not visibly dirty and you have no access to water and soap, use an alcohol based hand rub with no less than 70% alcohol
- d) When coughing practice proper cough etiquette by coughing into a tissue and discard into a bin immediately or cough into your sleeve
- e) If you think you have sign and symptoms of COVID-19, get tested and follow advice from your healthcare provider.
- f) Avoid crowded areas
- g) If you test positive, inform your employer so that they can take the necessary steps to protect fellow workers and others that come to your place of work

## Should I wear a mask to protect myself from COVID-19?

Yes, you must wear a cloth face mask or a homemade item that covers the nose and mouth when in a public place, or another appropriate item to cover the nose and mouth. You will not be allowed to use any form of public transport, or enter a building, place or premises, if you don't wear a cloth face mask or a homemade item that covers your nose and mouth when in a public place, or another appropriate item to cover the nose and mouth.

Your employer must provide every employee who may come into direct contact with members of the public as part of their duties with a cloth face mask to cover their nose and mouth or a homemade item that covers the nose and mouth when in a public place, or another appropriate item to cover the nose and mouth. Disposable face masks can only be used once.

## What is the correct and safe way to dispose of the hand gloves and face masks to limit the exposure to refuse collectors?

In a hospital or clinic, it will be part of the healthcare risk waste (medical waste) that gets removed under contract. In your household or workplace, you can dispose of gloves and masks in your normal refuse, but you can wrap the gloves and masks in newspaper before putting it in the bag. If you have been in contact with an infected person, then your domestic waste must be double-bagged and stored in the sun for a period of 3 to 5 days before placing it in the general waste bin for collection by the municipality.

## At work who or what determines whether or not the business or facility or building needs to close?

After an investigation into how many people were exposed to the infected worker and at risk of having been infected and need to go on quarantine for 10 days. This together with the establishment of which areas in the workplace need to be closed for decontamination. This decision then becomes a collaboration between the management of that business and health authorities. The decision is informed by how long the decontamination will take, whether the unaffected areas and unaffected employees can still safely continue to work.

## Whose responsibility is it to do the decontamination?

This is the responsibility of management in that organization. Guidance on how to decontaminate is available from both the Department of Health guidelines and guidance from the Department of Employment & Labour.

## What to do if I live in an informal settlement or a place where we use shared taps and toilets?

Don't touch the tap, toilet or door handle with your bare hands. Hold the tap, door handle or toilet lid with newspaper. You can also use your foot or shoulder to open the toilet door and lift the lid. Stand at least 6 steps away from other people when you queue for a toilet or tap. After using the toilet or tap – do not touch your face, eyes, nose or mouth until you wash your hands with soap and water. Clean the toilet or tap with 1 litre of water mixed with 4 teaspoons of Jik™/bleach (but keep this bleach mixture away from children).

IT'S IN OUR HANDS



**KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE**  
HEALTH  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



**GROWING  
KWAZULU-NATAL  
TOGETHER**