

Attention: All CBC members over age 60

Covid-19 risks in South Africa and how to manage them

Our aim here is to share some basic essentials about how to minimise your risk of getting the infection and infecting other people.

We cannot be saved by government policy alone – the things we can all do are what will save South African lives. And those things are pretty simple.

What causes the problem?

The way the virus spreads is that when we cough, sneeze, talk, sing or simply breathe, we spray very small drops of moisture into the air; these are respiratory particles. If someone is infected, the live virus will be present in these particles. These particles in our breath can spray quite far (several metres). If there is poor ventilation and no air movement, they can hang around in the air. They can land on surfaces (where the virus may survive for some hours) and if you are close to someone they can land on your eyes, nose or mouth. Most people who become infected get the coronavirus by direct contact with an infected person. It is also possible to be infected from touching your mouth, nose or eyes when your hands have the virus on them from touching a surface.

Remember the three Ds

Distance: The further away you are from someone who is infected, the less likely you are to be infected by them or to breathe in particles they have breathed out.

Dose: To become infected you need to have contact with a minimum dose, which takes time and exposure to people with the virus. The *longer* you are exposed to an infectious person, the *more people* you are exposed to, and the *fewer barriers* (like cloth masks) between you, the more likely you are to be exposed to the virus. People who have symptoms or are about to develop symptoms, including mild illness, are generally more infectious – i.e., are able to produce larger doses of infected respiratory particles.

Dispersion: Because smaller particles hang around in the air, the *movement* of air makes a really big difference. The particles disperse quickly if you are outside, particularly if there is a breeze or wind. We also know that sunlight breaks down the virus. Small, enclosed spaces with closed windows are high risk, especially when they are crowded.

The three Ds interact! If you are outdoors, at least one metre (but preferably two metres) apart from others, for less than 10 minutes, your risk of becoming infected is incredibly low. On the other hand, if you are

stuck in a room with closed windows, with someone with symptoms, your risk of getting the disease increases, whether or not you wear a cloth mask. Large known outbreaks have arisen in indoor functions in churches, weddings, music events, and restaurants or bars: places where a crowd of people are indoors, close together and talking and singing for hours.

Workers and families urgently need to pay attention to the interaction of the three Ds. Physical distancing is very effective when outdoors or for short encounters (10 minutes); once you are in a closed space, its effectiveness dramatically diminishes. *Masks and two metres distance are not enough if you are with people in an unventilated space all day.*

What can we do?

Physical distance: This is your major defence from infection. The good news is that although the virus spreads easily, short periods of contact will not get you infected. Passing someone in a supermarket, paying for your groceries, brushing past a runner in a park is no problem. But sitting in a taxi with closed windows, being alongside a sick co-worker at a work station, or singing in a packed church, is.

Go for outdoors and open all windows: Outside air is your best friend, and we may all have to start dressing more warmly in winter as many activities move outdoors and windows stay open. Open windows whenever possible on public transport or at work. Unfortunately, the interaction of the three Ds means that taxi rides of more than 15 minutes are risky, even if everyone is wearing a mask – *unless the windows are open.*

When inside the clubhouse open all windows.

Socialise outside if you can, keeping a two-metre distance. An outside braai or picnic is much safer than visiting someone in their house. Avoid visiting people or being visited inside homes for more than a few minutes. If you want to have a gathering, such as a religious gathering or funeral, do it outside if you can. An outside shebeen, with physical distancing, is far safer than an indoor shebeen with masks and obsessive hand washing. Outdoor sport is very low risk, unless involving close prolonged contact. (Even outdoors, don't talk to someone up close for long; maintain distance.)

Wear masks: There is now lots of evidence on the effectiveness of wearing cloth masks in the community. A cloth mask traps the virus-containing respiratory particles during breathing, coughing or talking, and helps prevent them from moving away from the mask-wearer. People who have very mild symptoms or are about to develop symptoms can spread the virus – this means that each of us might spread the virus unknowingly. If everyone wears a mask the amount of virus in the air is much reduced: we

all protect each other. Therefore you *should always wear a mask whenever you are close to people other than those in your household, especially indoors*. It is also vital that you wear your mask correctly – it must cover from the bridge of your nose to over your chin at all times. Wash your mask daily with soap or detergent.

Any indoor space where people come into contact – must require everyone to wear masks. As important as masks are, in an indoor space they are not a substitute for ventilation and distancing – you need all three.

Soap and surfaces: The virus is incredibly fragile, and washing your hands with any soap for 20 seconds kills the virus.

It is unclear how likely you are to contract the virus from surfaces, but it is wise to clean commonly touched workspaces and public areas often. Minimise touching and wipe down frequently touched surfaces – like door handles and railings. Washing your clothes after going out, or washing your car, and wiping all your groceries is not necessary; just wash your hands and keep surfaces around you clean and dry.

Family: Many extended families have regular get-togethers. Unfortunately, if you are indoors with people who don't live in the same home, you are seriously increasing the risk of spread to your family. Even if you know who each person has been in contact with in the past two weeks (and you may not), one person who was exposed in a shop or transport or work, who is not yet showing symptoms, can expose a whole extended family, who can then expose everyone they work with. A high percentage of people are infected in their own homes and take the virus to work. In China, many infections occurred in the home, so homes with vulnerable members in them should consider wearing masks at home. Meet outdoors wherever possible.

We know that children are much less likely to be infected with the virus and even when infected have no or mild symptoms. Going to school is unlikely to be dangerous for them (though schools have to think about protecting teachers). Children are probably also less likely to pass it onto others. But, sadly, you still may want to hold off from children hugging vulnerable grandparents for a while. One of the hardest parts of the lockdown has been stopping children from playing together. There is no easy answer here. From current knowledge it seems that there is likely to be some risk, and children's behaviour when they are together is a challenge to all three Ds. If children play together, encourage outdoors, masks or face shields and lots of handwashing (before, during and after). Consider who they come into contact with at home (an elderly grandparent, someone with diabetes) when deciding about play arrangements. Discourage hugging and kissing.

Personal risk factors: People of all ages and levels of health have become very ill and have died of Covid-19. But we know that some people are at much higher risk than others. The most significant risk factors for being badly affected are older age (especially over 65), diabetes, hypertension, HIV, uncontrolled asthma and obesity. If you or your family member has one of these factors, consider getting someone less vulnerable to do the shopping, consider going to shops at opening time, before anyone else has been in them. Vulnerable people should avoid taxis, trains, buses and gatherings if they can.

Protect others: Stay home if you have any of these symptoms: a fever, a cough, body aches, difficulty breathing, dizziness, headache, loss of sense of smell or taste.

Complete the **DAILY HEALTH SCREENING FOR CONSTANTIA BOWLING CLUB EMPLOYEES** provided before leaving for work and follow the instructions provided on the form.

When you are not at home, wear a cloth mask to protect others, especially indoors. Wearing a cloth mask protects other people – and they protect you.

When should you test? Getting a nasal swab test for coronavirus is less useful than many people think. A test that comes back negative does *not* mean you don't have the virus; it has a very high "false-negative" rate – almost a third of tests. Unless you need hospital care (in which case you will be tested), the test won't affect how you look after yourself. *If you have symptoms you should isolate as you may be infected.*

How should you isolate? If you have symptoms or have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive, call the Covid-19 helpline (0800 02 9999). Once you understand the three Ds, self-quarantining is not difficult to understand. If living with people, try to spend time in a room on your own or spend time outdoors. Try to avoid communal spaces wherever possible; when you can't avoid using these (the kitchen or bathroom), try to spend as little time as possible, wipe surfaces, wear cloth masks, and open windows.

Public toilets: There is evidence that flushing a toilet sprays particles in the air which can have the virus in them. Sanitise toilet seats and handles and put down toilet seats before flushing.

No shaming: Don't judge or stigmatise people with Covid-19. Getting infected does not mean they were careless or have bad hygiene. Anyone can get infected, millions of people worldwide have been, and in South Africa, for every case diagnosed there are likely to be 10 others who have it but have not been tested, and may not have symptoms; it may be you.

Take it seriously: Covid-19 is real! If we all act together and help each other, we can dramatically limit spread, reduce deaths and protect our hospitals. Remember that anyone can get Covid-19 and become very sick. Those who were seriously ill can take a long time to fully recover. Even if you are not high-risk for severe illness, your actions create risks for others. Covid-19 is spreading rapidly in South Africa and this is the time for more, not less, vigilance.

This is in our hands: Covid-19 is here to stay for a while and is rapidly spreading; but we need to live, to see each other and to work. South Africa had an early and strict lockdown, but we always knew we couldn't do this for long. The easing of the lockdown does not mean the threat of infection has decreased. In fact, the opposite is true. We must not give up on containing spread: there is a lot practically that we as individuals, commuters and workers can do to protect ourselves and each other as South Africa reopens.

Member details

I have read and understand the contents of this document.

Date: / /2020

Name:

Signature: