

Media Statement - Netcare

Netcare

Media release

What to do, and not to do, if you suspect you might have COVID-19

Follow these simple steps to use healthcare resources responsibly and appropriately, and to protect others from infection

Many South Africans are understandably concerned about the possibility of becoming infected with COVID-19. There are simple steps that individuals who meet case criteria, and suspect that they may have COVID-19 – the illness caused by the novel coronavirus – should take to ensure that they access healthcare appropriately, so that they can be assisted as efficiently and effectively as possible.

“It is every person’s responsibility to take the necessary precautions to prevent the possible spread of COVID-19 in our country. We encourage everyone to remain calm and follow the appropriate steps to protect their health and that of others, and to access healthcare resources in a responsible manner,” says Mande Toubkin, Netcare’s general manager: emergency and trauma.

Individuals who meet the case definitions for COVID-19 and suspect that they may have COVID-19, should follow the steps outlined below to access healthcare appropriately and to ensure that they are not responsible for spreading the infection to other people.

What not to do:

Don’t go to a hospital or emergency department for screening or testing

“Individuals wanting to be screened or tested for COVID-19 should not go to a hospital or emergency department. Emergency departments are specialised facilities that are equipped to provide urgent life-saving care to patients with traumatic injuries or medical emergencies. Over 80% of people with COVID-19 will have minor to moderate symptoms and there is no reason for them to be seen in an emergency department,” she says.

“Coming to a hospital if you suspect that you have COVID-19, places the hospital community or others at unnecessary risk. What is important is that you practise social distancing and self-quarantine at home so you don’t spread the infection to others.”

What you should do:

Phone your primary healthcare provider if you meet the case definitions for COVID-19 and suspect you may have COVID-19. Don’t go to the GP’s rooms without phoning in advance.

When phoning your GP, bring any relevant information to their attention including your recent travel history, contact with persons who had recently travelled to countries with COVID-19 outbreaks,

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personal contact with a person with confirmed COVID-19, or symptoms associated with COVID-19 that you are experiencing. The doctor may ask specific questions to assess you, advise whether you need to be tested for COVID-19, and give you a referral to a pathology laboratory for testing to be done.

If you have phoned your doctor and they want you to come to the consulting rooms, they will be able to take the necessary safety precautions to assist you promptly when you arrive whilst safeguarding themselves and others at the facility from possible infection. Your doctor may examine you and take a swab from inside your nose and mouth, which will be sent to the laboratory for COVID-19 testing. You should receive the results within 48 to 72 hours, and you should self-quarantine at home until the results are known.

Self-quarantine at home for suspected or confirmed COVID-19

If you suspect that you have COVID-19, you need to self-quarantine. It is crucial that you do not have contact with other people while waiting for the results, so that there is no risk that you could pass on the infection to them, should the test results later confirm that you have tested positively for COVID-19.

- DO NOT leave your house to go to any public places. If you need to go outside your home, do so on your own, not with any other people.
- If you live with other people, avoid or keep any contact to a minimum. Keep a distance of at least two metres from them if you do need to have contact, and do not spend time in the same room with another person.
- Stay in a room that is well ventilated, and open windows for ventilation.
- Discourage any visitors to your home.
- If you have a cough, wear a mask but make sure you follow the guidelines for the correct way of putting on the mask, wearing it and disposing of it to offer effective protection against the spread of infection.
- Use tissues and dispose of them immediately after use in a separate rubbish bag.
- Clean your hands often and thoroughly with alcohol based hand rub or hand spray, or wash them with soap and hot water for at least 20 seconds.
- If you have to share a bathroom with others, clean the bathroom, door handles, taps and any other surfaces you may have touched with a bleach-based disinfectant each time you have used it to reduce the risk of spreading the infection.
- Keep the towels you use separately, do not share towels with other people.
- Ask friends or family to deliver essential groceries and medicines you may need while you are in self-quarantine. Alternatively, arrange for these items to be delivered by your supermarket or pharmacy. In either case, ask them to leave the deliveries outside the home for you to fetch.
- Don't eat with other people in the home. If possible, use disposable crockery and utensils, and dispose of these in a separate rubbish bag. If you use normal crockery and utensils, you yourself should wash the items you have used immediately in hot water and dishwashing

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liquid or in a dishwasher at high temperature, separately for those used by other people in the home. Keep the crockery and utensils you use separately from that used by others in the home.

- Maintain good home hygiene, and clean any surfaces you may have touched often and thoroughly with a bleach-based disinfectant.
- Wash your clothing separately from that of others, in a washing machine at high temperature.
- If your symptoms worsen, phone the doctor who tested you for guidance.
- If you believe your symptoms have worsened to the point that you are facing a medical emergency, contact an emergency medical services provider and make them aware that you have been tested for COVID-19 and are awaiting the results.

“The over 80% of people with confirmed COVID-19 who have little or mild symptoms do not need to be admitted to hospital but will be able to recover at home, in self-quarantine, for 14 days. Only persons whose condition is such that they require in-hospital care need to be admitted,” Toubin concludes.

Ends

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