

Dear Member

Stay safe and healthy this Festive Season by carefully considering your planned travel to COVID hotspots

We are reaching out to you today to share information that is fundamentally important to keeping you and your loved ones safe over the coming holiday period.

Our data demonstrates that we are unfortunately now experiencing a second wave of COVID-19 infections, as publicly confirmed by our Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize, this past week. This second wave has commenced in the **Eastern and Western Cape**, though in all likelihood will affect other regions too.

The timing of this second wave, and the location of **hot spots in the Eastern and Western Cape** is concerning, considering it converges with the migration of holiday makers to these same regions. Recently, COVID-19 cases have surged in **Nelson Mandela Bay (Port Elizabeth), Buffalo City (East London) and the Garden Route (Plettenberg Bay, Knysna, George, Mossel Bay and surrounds)**.

- The **healthcare infrastructure in these towns is under immense strain**, and we are now **experiencing a shortage of hospital beds and critical care facilities**.
- If you who require urgent treatment in these areas, you may be **transported by the emergency services to larger metros, with available hospital capacity, to access care in cases where this is possible**.

It is critical that we do all we can to protect your health and prevent any further burden on hospitals in hotspot areas, and minimise these emergency transfer requirements to members who are most critically ill.

Our data shows conclusively that individuals over the age of 60, particularly if physically inactive and especially those living with chronic conditions, are at higher risk of developing serious complications from COVID-19.

This very concerning situation is likely to persist for the rest of December and into early January. It is with this in mind that we would like to ask you to:

1. **Reconsider any travel plans to hotspot areas, currently including Nelson Mandela Bay, the Garden Route and Buffalo City.**
2. **Maintain strict diligence in adhering to the recommended preventive measures** that limit your exposure to COVID-19, which remain important and worthy of re-emphasis:
 - **Wear a face mask** when you are outside in public, or near other people and avoid touching your mask
 - **Practice physical distancing** by keeping a safe space between yourself and others
 - **Ensure proper, frequent handwashing** for at least 20 seconds with soap and water (or with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer)
 - **Cough and sneeze** into your bent elbow, or into a tissue, followed by safe disposal of the tissue and handwashing immediately thereafter
 - Remain **fully compliant in taking your chronic medicine**, adhering closely to your prescription
 - **Ensure that others** in your household, or anyone you are regularly in close contact with, follows these preventive measures to curb the spread of illness.

Please be assured that we are at all times guided by our commitment to ensure you and your family are able to access the best care possible. The health and safety of you and your loved ones, is our absolute priority.

We commit to keeping you updated via email and SMS regarding hotspot areas in the country, as well as to continue to share all the information you need to maintain your health through every stage of our country's experience of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **If you haven't already, please download and use the [COVID Alert SA app](#).** This user-friendly app ensures absolute privacy while keeping every user notified (in as close to real time as possible) about their exposure to COVID-19. The app does not track location and app users remain 100% anonymous at all times.
- **If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 or fall ill** and need health professional guidance,. This will allow you safe access to a healthcare professional while minimising everyone's risk of exposure to COVID-19. On our website, you will be guided through a risk assessment questionnaire before you connect with the dedicated COVID-19 Care Team of doctors. You can immediately have a video or text consultation with an available doctor or book a consultation at a convenient time.
- If you are someone who has potentially higher risk of a worse manifestation of COVID-19 infection, we have also developed special remote monitoring and home support services to assist you, should you require these.

We realise that this has been a difficult and complicated year, and that this holiday season represents a welcome reprieve from the pressure of the past months. Consequently, we are aware of the difficulties that this situation, and this specific request, to reconsider travel plans, causes.

Nonetheless, it remains our foremost priority to ensure you are fully informed and optimally protected.

Despite the welcome family time and relief that this holiday period promises, please do recognise the risks that your travel to hot spot areas raises.

Stay informed and stay healthy!

Regards

<https://www.discovery.co.za/gallery/template-resources/signatures/discovery/ryan-noach.jpg>

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On behalf Lonmin Medical scheme

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