



### Who is at risk of getting COVID-19?

Currently people who have been in contact with somebody with COVID-19 are at higher risk of contracting the virus; this includes returning travellers as well as local residents.

The NICD (National Institute for Communicable Diseases) has noted that those at higher risk of severe illness are older adults and those with existing medical conditions such as chronic heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, cancers, immune suppression or lung disease.

**We request that all patients who visit PathCare laboratories wear a cloth or surgical mask when coming to the laboratory. This will assist in keeping you safe or keeping other patients safe if you have symptoms.**



### What symptoms will I have with COVID-19?

Most people who get this disease will have very mild symptoms, like having a cold.

People who develop COVID-19 generally have the following symptoms:

Fever • Headache • Sore throat • Cough • Muscle aches

In the minority of cases an individual may develop severe symptoms such as difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, or diarrhoea. If this happens, it is imperative that medical attention is sought and that you go to the hospital



### How does it spread?

Person to person contact is the main way the virus spreads. This is either through close contact or by the spread of droplets when someone who has the virus coughs or sneezes on you. Generally, if you are more than 2 meters away, the droplets won't reach you, and should not be able to infect you.

However, those droplets can land on surfaces, such as tables, door handles, or any other surface. The virus can survive on the surface for a long time (currently estimated to be between 7-9 days if not cleaned adequately and depending on the type of surface).

If you touch that contaminated surface with the virus and then touch your face, especially your eyes, mouth or nose, you could become infected.



### Can I have contracted the virus but have no symptoms?

Yes you can. If you are infected but show no symptoms, you might still be infectious so other people and it is therefore very important to keep to recommendations on hand hygiene and social distancing.



### What tests are done to diagnose COVID-19?

We will collect a throat and/or nose swab or other type of sample and forward it to our laboratory for testing. The South African National Health Laboratory Service laboratories and private laboratories have the capability to perform this test.

The test takes about 48 hours to process. You will receive a SMS with your result stating whether the virus was DETECTED OR NOT DETECTED. We will contact your doctor with your results as well. Please wait for your doctor to contact you.



### How do I go about being tested?

Should you meet the case definition as defined by the NICD, and you present with the symptoms mentioned previously, it's essential that you contact your doctor.

Your doctor might not want you to physically come into the surgery, and might prefer a telephonic consultation. Your doctor will then furnish you with important documentation that you need to bring along to our branch for testing. We cannot test you without the documentation or a doctor's referral.



### Are there any preventative measures I can take against contracting the virus?

There is currently no vaccine available to prevent SARS-CoV-2 infection, but we urge you to get vaccinated against the flu, as this will strengthen your immune system.

Risk of infection and transmission can be reduced by:

- Reducing personal contact (e.g. by no longer shaking hands).
- Cleaning your hands before touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Properly cleaning your hands after coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid using handkerchiefs and rather use a tissue and discard it.



### Do I need to routinely use a face mask?

Facemasks are necessary if you show symptoms compatible with COVID-19, and may be beneficial if worn in public settings.



### How is COVID-19 treated?

There is no specific treatment for COVID-19. Symptomatic treatment may be given, for example to reduce fever, muscle aches and sore throat. If symptoms are severe (e.g. if an individual requires oxygen due to difficulties breathing) treatment should not be managed at home and will need to take place in hospital.



### What do I do if I'm concerned I have COVID-19?

Contact your doctor. If your symptoms are mild, it might be sufficient to stay at home and treat your symptoms, keep hydrated and get lots of rest. Currently the recommended period of time to stay at home is 14 days, as you could be infective for this amount of time. Keep practicing good hygiene at home and clean surfaces regularly.



### Should I get tested for the virus?

If your symptoms are mild, no, it is not necessary to be tested but consult your doctor for advice.



### What do I do if I have been in contact with someone with a coronavirus infection?

If you have been in contact with somebody with confirmed or probable COVID-19, you should self-isolate for 14 days.

Get plenty of rest, and stay hydrated by drinking enough fluids.

If you develop any symptoms, contact your doctor and:

- Practice good cough etiquette when coughing or sneezing.
- Clean your hands after coughing or sneezing.

If you feel short of breath, or have difficulty breathing, go to the nearest hospital. If possible, please try to phone ahead and inform the hospital /clinic/GP to tell them that you are coming.

If you are coughing, you may be given a face mask to prevent transmission to other patients and healthcare workers.