



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



INTERNAL MEMO

Date:	11 March 2021		
To:	The Honorable Dr ZL Mkhize, Minister of Health	From:	Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) on COVID-19

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EASTER PERIOD

Problem Statement

What additional measures should be put in place to mitigate the spread of SARS-CoV-2 over the Easter period?

Implications

- There are numerous public holidays coming up (21 March – Human Rights Day; 2 to 5 April - Easter Weekend; 27 April – Freedom Day; and 1 May – Workers Day).
- The upcoming Easter period is a time where many people travel for religious and family gatherings, which increases risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission.
- It will be important to consider mitigating strategies, including proposed restrictions to ensure that this period does not result in increased SARS-CoV-2 spread, and potentially increase the impact of the Third Wave.

Rationale

- To reduce the risk of a substantial increase in cases during the Easter period, interventions are required to a) reduce the risk of super-spreading events; b) reduce the risk of spread through wide-scale movement of people and c) reduce the risk of transmission by mitigating high risk settings.
- The Easter period is the highest risk period, extending from midnight on 1 April to midnight on 11 April 2021.
- During this period, Christians (Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday), Jews (Peysach), Hindus (Khavady) and Muslims (Isthima) have large gatherings. These kinds of religious gatherings present a particularly high risk of becoming super-spreading events, which could readily lead to the third wave.
- Further, certain beaches attract very large crowds, which also pose a high risk of transmission on the beaches, in the ablution facilities and in various facilities at the beaches.

Recommendations

The following prevention measures and restrictions are recommended for a 11 day period from midnight on 31 March 2021 to midnight on 11 April 2021 (to cover travel for the Easter and holiday period):

1. General

- The alert level should be raised to Alert Level 2.
- Continued promotion of non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs): mandatory mask use, good ventilation, hand washing, social distancing etc.
- Note: appropriate mask use requires that both the nose and mouth be covered.
- Mask use also applies to vaccinated individuals.

2. Gatherings:

- All gatherings (including but not limited to religious and sporting events) restricted to a maximum of 50 people indoors and 100 outdoors or, for smaller indoor venues (<100 people), 50% of maximum capacity.
- The number of people in restaurants/bars/shebeens is restricted to 50% of their capacity or 50 people (whichever is smaller).
- Elderly and those at high risk for severe COVID-19 should avoid attending gatherings.
- Singing at public gatherings should be discouraged.

3. Beaches/parks/dams an other recreational areas

- Local municipalities should assess the risks associated with expected beach/parks/dams/other recreational areas attendance during the Easter period and make a determination on whether to close these areas.

4. Movement of persons

- Masks enforced on all public transport.
- Taxi/bus capacity to not exceed 70% for long distance travel (journeys >2 hours).
- Taxis/buses to ensure that at least one window on either side of the vehicle is open.
- Public should be encouraged to only undertake essential inter-provincial travel over this period.

5. Curfew

- The hours of the curfew increased to 10pm to 4am.

6. Alcohol sales and consumption

- Sale of alcohol restricted to Monday to Thursday 10h00 to 18h00.

An additional advisory will be provided on recommendations to mitigate the impact of the Third Wave. This will include health systems strengthening, communication, infection prevention and control, clinical and epidemiology considerations.

Thank you for consideration of this request.

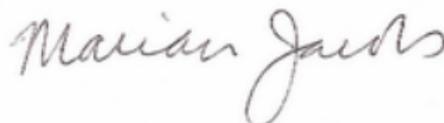
Kind regards,



PROF SALIM S. ABDOOL KARIM

CO-CHAIRPERSONS: MINISTERIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON COVID-19

DATE: 11 March 2021



PROF MARIAN JACOBS

CC:

- » **Dr S Buthelezi (Director-General: Health)**
- » **Dr T Pillay (Deputy Director-General)**
- » **Incident Management Team**