

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

To: Editors & Health Journalists  
Issued by: Department of Health  
Date: Tuesday, 30 April 2024

### **Health Department dismisses reports of new Covid variant**

**Pretoria:** The Department of Health has noted with concern an old fake news about Covid-19 Omicron XBB variant circulating on social media platforms advising people to wear face masks because of an alleged deadly and not easy to detect variant.

This is a misleading message which first resurfaced during the peak of the pandemic without a traceable source. We urge members of the public to be vigilant and ignore this malicious social media content whose intent is to cause unnecessary panic and confusion, especially as the country is entering influenza season.

The fact of the matter is COVID-19 remains circulating at relatively low levels around the country just like in other parts of the world. Thus, there is no need for public to panic because many people have developed some level of immunity from both vaccine and infections. The current strain or variant in circulation is less severe and less transmissible.

Taking protective measures in our daily lives, including non-pharmaceutical interventions including hand hygiene, will help to prevent the spread of other respiratory infections including influenza. The department will keep the public abreast as and when there is a surge in cases of illness caused by any virus of concern or outbreak of any disease.

### **For more information and media enquiries, please contact:**

Foster Mohale  
National Department of Health Spokesperson  
072 432 3792  
[Foster.mohale@health.gov.za](mailto:Foster.mohale@health.gov.za)

Doctor Tshwale  
Minister of Health's Spokesperson  
063 657 8487  
[Doctor.tshwale@health.gov.za](mailto:Doctor.tshwale@health.gov.za)