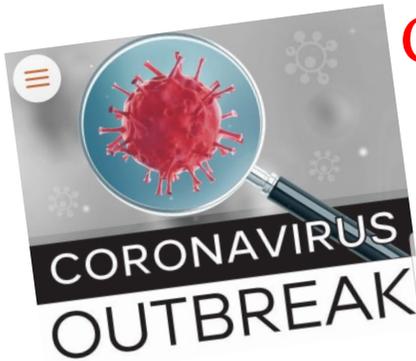




eNewsletter

April 2020



COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

EXTENDED TO 30 APRIL 2020

How the world has changed over the last few weeks ... How the coronavirus has turned our lives upside down. Since the World Health Organisation declared a pandemic on 11 March 2020, more than a million cases have since been confirmed globally, with statistics and fatalities climbing daily.

The world has never seen anything like this before. This virus, of unpredictable proportions, crept upon us very quietly but aggressively with devastating repercussions on our personal lives, our country, and the world! Images of some of the world's busiest cities under lockdown, turning them into ghost towns, are surreal. Covid-19 has proven to be no respecter of persons – it transcends religious beliefs; political persuasions; current health and economic status.

When President Ramaphosa announced the 21 day lockdown from 26 March 2020, **everything** changed – closed schools/churches/public facilities; no transport/entertainment/recreation/ruined holidays; no family celebrations/weddings/funerals; major sporting events cancelled; economic chaos, panic buying, stockpiling, masks, gloves, stigmatization, hotels turned into quarantine sites, etc. Disinfectants, hand sanitizers and toilet paper became the most important commodities. The President joined many world leaders in crying out to God to save their countries and their people.

Initially it was reported that those affected globally were mainly over the age of 60 with other underlying conditions. However, we are seeing younger people becoming infected and losing their lives, even without underlying conditions. More disturbingly was a recent report of a 6 week old baby in Connecticut, USA who tested positive and sadly succumbed to this dreaded virus.

Currently, the brightest minds on earth are working around the clock to find solutions so that everyone can return to the world as they knew it, **just the other day**. Exhausted medical staff are carrying the added burden of trying to avoid infecting their own families. Coughing and sneezing create immediate anxiety. Businessmen are fearful about a most uncertain future, while ordinary citizens are desperately trying to find ways to sustain their families and meet their financial obligations in the face of job losses, and watching their hard earned savings dwindling by the day. Everyone is desperately waiting for **that** all important news report to say that the virus has peaked and that there is some light at the end of the tunnel.

It is vital for one's mental health not to be overwhelmed by every news report or post on social media, as some have proven to be fake—so sharing news needs to be done with discretion as spreading fake news is illegal. It is advisable to follow news via reliable sources like the World Health Organisation or official spokespersons from our government.

Age-in-Action acknowledges and sincerely thanks our government for every effort made to deal with this pandemic; the many medical staff at the frontline of the situation trying to save as many lives as they can; and every person providing essential services to keep our country going during Covid-19. It is indeed a time not just to express sympathy for those infected/affected, but also to lend a helping hand where possible.

Latest news reports indicate that South Africa now has over 2 000 cases and also increased fatalities

—very sad indeed !

COVID-19 ONLINE RESOURCE & NEWS PORTAL

Resource : Website—National Department of Health, South Africa

Covid-19 Hotline : **0800 029 999**

Covid-19 Whatsapp number : **0600 123 456**

Online news portal : **www.SAcoronavirus.co.za**

Ways of Avoiding Infection:

- Sanitize hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Cough/sneeze into elbow —wear a mask if possible.
- Adhere to social distancing when out in public, stay 1—2m apart.
- Contact the Covid-19 Hotline immediately should you suspect that you have been exposed to the virus.
- Adhere to the lockdown— flatten the curve, **STAY AT HOME!** Leave home only to buy essentials or for medical treatment.

HOW ARE OLDER PERSONS AFFECTED ?

Seniors clubs are hubs which not only provide older persons with an opportunity to socialise with their peers, but also ensure that they enjoy nutritious meal(s).

In addition, these groups are their “*safe spaces*” where they get to share their concerns—be it health, socio-economic, issues with extended families; even more so for those who are caring for children/grandchildren and where they give each other advice based on personal experience.

The lockdown means that these older persons are now without that support system, including the meals, which they so sorely need and enjoy.

The social cohesion at these hubs is missed as the older persons are now faced with their run of the mill existence without any reprieve whatsoever. There are those who are living in confined spaces as they share their dwellings or living quarters with extended families, and now who have to exercise much more patience during this time.

The financial impact of the lockdown is cause for concern as social grants were paid at the end of March for essential items, but with entire families being home, purchases are inadequate to provide for their basic needs.

The benefits of the service centre/social club concept cannot be over-emphasized and beneficiaries have indicated that these interactions contribute tremendously towards good mental health, which then helps them to cope with life’s challenges a bit better.

In KwaZulu-Natal, awareness campaigns were rolled out but some older persons voiced their concern about hygiene as that they do not even have clean drinking water, not to mention for frequent washing of hands.



PRAYERS TO OUR WORLD HEROES



The new normal has also brought new challenges -

Our lives have been disrupted which causes anxiety. We feel trapped because we cannot do the things we would like to, which can make us irritable. Limited movement became a reality many find difficult to deal with not just for those who travel a lot by air, but also for commuting for basic daily needs.

We need to deal with children who are usually at school under the care of teachers, but now need our full attention 24/7. We have adult children home for lockdown who have become accustomed to managing their own lives but now have to align themselves with their parents’ rules, which causes tension at times. Couples who usually went their separate ways during the day are at times surprised that they are edgy for being together all the time.

Shopping has changed drastically and has to be done in accordance with reduced trading hours; buying essential items only; etc.

Thanks to technology, most faith based organisations are using every available social media platform to remain connected to their congregants, which is very convenient— even though the personal interaction is definitely missed.

ARE YOU AWARE OF AN OLDER PERSON BEING ABUSED?

If so, please contact our Care Line, your local branch of the SA Police Service or Department of Social Development office.

It is our collective responsibility to stop the scourge of abuse!



Are you **aware** or **suspect** abuse of an older person?

We are legally obliged and have a collective responsibility to speak out against the scourge of abuse of older persons

Silence is **NOT** Golden

Contact the Care-Line on **0800 333 231**
visit our website at www.age-in-action.co.za

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON RESIDENTIAL CARE FACILITIES

By : Karen Meyer, Social Worker

Who would believe that Covid-19 would have such a drastic impact on our daily lives and communities, especially those living in residential care facilities ?

How does an old age home balance the safety of its staff and their families with striving to provide the necessary care to its residents ? Furthermore, how can the home secure food and ensure sound hygienic practices?

When the pandemic became a reality, some residential care facilities made their staff aware about the seriousness of the situation and put protocols in place immediately to keep residents and staff safe.

Residential care facilities throughout South Africa are all facing challenges as the lockdown continues. These care facilities are facing financial uncertainty as NGO's/facilities hugely depend on ongoing fundraising projects and donations from corporates. In addition, increased security measures had to be taken to ensure that residents were not placed at risk by anyone from the community and even family members who usually visited them. This impacted heavily on the supply of toiletries, eats and treats, which now became the full responsibility of the facility.

Many facilities are now depending on volunteers to perform essential services, e.g. cooking, physical care of residents, cleaning of the home in order to operate at an acceptable level. In some instances, staff members have opted to live in whilst on duty and facilities supply them with meals and accommodation. None the less, the risks are high.

Homes are running low on supplies of hand sanitizer, masks and cleaning material as most suppliers are closed or out of stock. Reports in this regard have been logged to the Dept. of Health and Dept. of Social Development and their responses are awaited. In addition :

- Sufficient toilet paper is a challenge as some suppliers are closed or the homes do not have enough money to stock up.
- Homes, especially in marginalized communities, without vehicles are particularly challenged as they cannot buy or deliver food.
- Access to adult diapers and toiletries is difficult.
- In the absence of physical contact, family members can only stay in touch with their elderly relatives via telephone and email.

Older persons are experiencing fear for their families and children and some do not understand why their families do not visit them. Ultimately it is our responsibility to reassure them that we care and that we will ensure that they will continue to be treated with dignity and respect.

* Opinions expressed are that of the author.

We salute the staff of residential care facilities for their devotion and passion in

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