



MEDIA ADVISORY

To: Editors & Health Journalists
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HEALTH DEPARTMENT KICKS-OFF SAFER FESTIVE SEASON CAMPAIGN

Pretoria: As the country prepares for Covid-19 resurgence, the National Department of Health in collaboration with Centre for Communication Impact, Clinton Health Access Initiative and other partners have launched a creative festive season campaign to remind the public that Covid-19 is still an everyday reality.

The campaign seeks to influence the social behaviour change amongst South Africans by reminding them about the risky health behaviours that cannot only pose a threat on their lives, but also contribute to the current Covid-19 resurgence.

Members of the public are also reminded that healthcare facilities will remain open and accessible at all times, including during lockdown and festive season. However, the services are provided in compliance with strict non-pharmaceutical Covid-19 prevention protocols which include, maintaining social distancing, wearing a facemask, washing hands with water and soap or using an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.

The data has shown that during the hard Covid-19 lockdown period, people including patients on chronic treatment avoided health facilities like other public spaces due to fear of possible infections. This has however, resulted in more uncollected chronic medication in some facilities and designated collection points which suggests that some patients defaulted their life-saving treatment.

As part of ongoing efforts to amplify the health awareness messages including existing Covid-19 messages to remain more relevant and resonant with the public, the Department and partners have joined hands with a popular and self-taught animator Jonas Lekganyane, popularly known as Noko Mashaba, and developed Covid-19 messaging from an instructional nature of communication to a more realistic and humorous tone.



TOGETHER WE CAN BEAT THE CORONAVIRUS

This has been implemented through personalising the virus with the creation of a character called “**Covid Creature**” and its many minions, visually showing their mission to infect as many people as possible through the eyes of the cult favourite animation character, Noko Mashaba.

It is envisaged that this campaign execution approach will allow Government and partners to tell Covid related stories that are familiar with most people while illustrating the risk inherent in everyday scenarios in promotion of the easily available and commonly recommended non-pharmaceutical interventions to be observed by all citizens in order to minimise the risk of exposure to the pandemic.

Like many countries around the world, South Africa is on a precipice. We have survived the first wave of high Covid-19 infection, but the disease is still with us. Despite various initiatives introduced in South Africa as part of Covid-19 response, over 5,8 million tests were conducted with about 866 000 positive cases identified, and regrettably more than 23 450 lives have been lost to this fast spreading deadly pandemic since the beginning of lockdown in March 2020.

As the festive season kicks-off, Covid-19 risk continues to increase as people are expected travel to different places including holiday destinations, travelling in both private and public transport such as buses and taxis. On the other hand, public places like malls and shopping centres are expected to be experience high volumes of people, and these can be epicentres unless people observe Covid-19 preventative protocols to prevent new infections.

Thus, our choices while on festive season and at all times will continue to determine the future of the country as far as the fight against the pandemic is concerned. Enjoying holidays with our loved ones doesn't mean we should let our guard down and we must remember that every additional person we come into contact with, increases the chances of possible transmission.

Thus, people are urged to avoid large gatherings because these are super-spreader events.

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<https://twitter.com/HealthZA/status/1338921841327529988?s=20>

