

Issued by: National Institute for Communicable Diseases

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As of 10 March 2020, the National Institute for Communication (NICD), a division of the National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS), confirms that a total of 645 persons have been tested for SARS-CoV-2 in South Africa. We confirm that we have identified three (6) new confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the country. This brings the total number of laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases in South Africa to 13.

The additional cases were not part of the group of ten people who travelled to Italy. The patients have since been isolated and are receiving care at a designated healthcare facility. All tracing of possible contacts that the patients may have been in contact with are being traced.

The total provincial break down of COVID-19 cases to date is as follows:

- KwaZulu-Natal: 7
- Gauteng: 5
- Western Cape: 1

The identification of additional imported cases of COVID-19 is not unexpected and is likely related to increasing numbers of cases in other parts of the world, leading to increased importation risks.

All the cases identified to date have been in travellers from affected countries. At this time there is no indication that COVID-19 is circulating widely in the community in South Africa.

To ensure effective response to COVID-19 the NICD has since expanded testing for SARS-CoV-2 to include other public health laboratories in the NHLS and laboratories in the private sector. It is important to note that testing of persons who meet the case definition is free of charge at the NICD and testing is conducted 24 hours seven days a week. Active surveillance for COVID-19 among individuals with acute respiratory symptoms will be fast-tracked to understand the spread of COVID-19. If a private laboratory identifies a positive case, samples will be sent to the NICD to verify and confirm the results.

We urge the public to continue to heed to preventative precautions for COVID-19 such as practising frequent hand hygiene and cough etiquette, and adhering to the following:

- Avoid close contact with people suffering from acute respiratory infections.
- Practice frequent hand-washing, especially after direct contact with ill people or their environment.
- Avoid visiting markets where live animals are sold.
- Travellers with symptoms of acute respiratory infection should practice cough etiquette (maintain distance, cover coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues or clothing and wash hands).
- Health practitioners should provide travellers with information to reduce the general risk of acute respiratory infections, via travel health clinics, travel agencies, conveyance operators and at points of entry. Travellers should self-report if they feel ill.

Please follow the link <http://www.nicd.ac.za/latest-confirmed-cases-of-covid-19-in-south-africa/> for the full statement.

For COVID-19 resources and technical documents, please click on <http://www.nicd.ac.za/diseases-a-z-index/covid-19/>. We also added communication resources that you can download and share.

Ends.

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