

STATEMENT (COVID-19)

Islamic Medical Association of South Africa [IMASA]

Date: 18.03.2020

Assalaamu Alaikum Warahmatullaahie Wabarakaatuh

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

All praises are due to the Almighty Allah in all His attributes and universal blessings upon the Leader of mankind, the beloved Nabi Muhammad (SAW)

Coronavirus disease 2019, or "**COVID-19**," is an infection caused by a virus called SARS-CoV-2 (Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2). The first case appeared in China in December 2019 and has now spread to over 100 countries with almost 180 000 cases and 8 000 fatalities. The World Health Organization has called this a Pandemic and our President has laid out strict guidelines of which we as responsible citizens are encouraged to follow to curb the spread of this virus. Our concern lies in reducing spread the speed at which it spreads so that our health system can cope with the number of patients requiring care. Therefore, it is every person's responsibility to reduce transmission of the virus.

CLINICAL PRESENTATION

The presentation includes a range of symptoms from asymptomatic to mild flu-like illness to severe pneumonia. The incubation period is 2-14 days. The most common symptoms include: **fever** of ≥ 38 °C, **cough**, fatigue, difficulty breathing, sore joints, sore throat, headache and chills. Risk factors include **old age** (>70 years) and heart, lung and other chronic diseases. 80% of symptomatic patients have mild disease, 15% develop severe disease (difficulty breathing) and 5% will become critically ill.

PREVENTION OF SPREAD

General precautions include **hand hygiene**, avoiding touching your face with your hands, **limit mass gatherings** and **avoiding unnecessary travel**. Minimize contact when at work or at the masjid. One should follow their local masjid's instructions and observe general hygiene instructions, perform wudhu at home and avoid contact. The current circumstances require drastic behavioral changes to reduce the impact of this disease.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Avoid going to shopping centers and other places where large groups gather.
2. Avoid visiting others if you are ill.
3. Get tested if you are a person of interest as defined by the NICD. Your GP can advise, or you can call the NICD hotline.
4. Avoid international travel and even non-essential local travel.



5. Avoid panic shopping and hoarding.
6. Make abundant istighfaar and supplicate to Allah (SWT)

Masaajid are the houses of Allah (SWT) and offer the Muslims solitude, comfort and spiritual enrichment. The masjid is also the office and the administrative hub of communities to gather to resolve day to day community wide issues. To heed the Public Health call, we should adhere to the guidance provided by the countries Infectious Disease Specialists; our Medical Doctors; and the Ulema.

When a lockdown is decreed by the President, all masaajid should be closed. In the interim masaajid may remain open as do shopping centres and business offices.

In order to manage the health risk, the following are strict criteria that should be followed to permit continued operations. If a masjid cannot adhere to all strictly and reduce the risk, we strictly advocate closure. Every masjid will assume responsibility for their actions and be accountable to the community and Allah for violations to the guidance provided.

The points below should be strictly adhered to for all salawaat; especially Jumuaah. Any masaajid with average congregation in excess of 50 persons prior to March; and with small jamaat khanas should heed the restrictions for every salah to prevent crowding.

The restrictions should be adopted without compromise to ensure that any health risk is averted especially where the risk of crowding is high. We have a responsibility to our community and our country to adhere to the guidance provided by the President of South Africa. The number 100 pertains to mass gatherings and is not cast in stone for all gatherings. We are concerned that the community has adopted this as the standard. This is incorrect. Masaajid should restrict the size of the jamaat to 10 indoors where room size exceeds 50 meters square; or 20 in an open courtyard.

SPECIFIC GUIDANCE FOR MASAAJID

Please note that completely closing the masjid is the safest way to break the chains of transmission but the situation continues to evolve each day and national authorities have not mandated this as yet. Individual masaajid have already taken decisions and if the masjid decides to remain open, then the following should apply:

1. Make wudhu at home, all masaajid should restrict access to wudhu facilities.
2. All ablution-wudhu facilities will be closed, and no drinking water will be available through dispensers.
3. Paper towels should be provided, and normal towels should be removed.
4. Masaajid should in general remain open but the size of the congregation should be restricted to 10 persons only.
5. Salah should preferably be performed in an open-air place with good ventilation. Musallees should be accustomed to praying in car parks and courtyards where applicable.
6. All carpeted areas of the masjid will be closed off and not utilized at all. Not even by placing prayer mats on the carpet.
7. People should bring their own ground mat for prayer, not the standard size musallah,



preferably hand towel size. There will be no sharing of prayer mats and prayer mats should be folded to reduce the size.

8. Prayer areas should be cleaned after every salah - this may require salah to be performed on tiles or plastic mats. The correct cleaning agents must be used which may include hypochlorite or alcohol. We advise a cap of Jik in a litre of water as a minimum. All areas that musallees pray at should be cleaned before and after the 5 congregational salawaat.
9. Elderly people (>60y) or those with chronic diseases should pray at home.
10. People who are ill with flu-like symptoms, or with suspected or confirmed COVID19- including travelers from overseas - should pray at home (for a duration as recommended by their doctor).
11. All towels, tasbeehs, reading material, kutub and shared items will be removed.
12. Hand sanitizers should be available at the entrance and at the prayer area.
13. No food should be consumed in the masjid.
14. Only fardh salah should be performed at the masjid and loitering after salaah should be discouraged.

THE FOLLOWING PERSONS SHOULD NOT BE PERMITTED AT THE MASJID

1. Any vulnerable person who is over the age of (>60y); unwell, with flu-like symptoms; or chronically unwell should not enter the masjid during this time.
2. People who are ill with flu-like symptoms, or with suspected or confirmed COVID19- including travelers from overseas- should pray at home.
3. All travellers ie; not from the surrounding community that frequent the masjid daily.
4. All children – under 12y and non baligh.

OTHER

1. All other gatherings including halqas, madrassah classes and similar should be stopped and follow the similar rules set out by Government regarding educational institutions.

If one has the **COVID-19** it is NOT permissible to attend any public gathering even a masjid. If a patient is symptomatic, your Doctor will give supportive therapy, like oxygen, conservative fluid management and empiric antibiotics to treat co-pathogens. There is no current evidence to recommend any specific treatment.

Numerous medical experts have been consulted and the general opinion (bearing in mind that the current outbreak in South Africa is dynamic) is that we need to exercise caution. For now, it is reasonable to continue with Jum'ah congregations within the current restrictions and precautions set out by the Department of Health. The situation might change from week to week. Each individual is responsible for minimizing the risk to himself/herself and others. May Allah guide us in making the correct decisions. AAMEEN

***We put full trust in Allah and encourage supplication with Dua.
This Pandemic has showed us how weak we are as humans and how something not
visible to the eye has changed the world, we live in.
However, this is an opportunity to reassess our busy lives and to return to Allah.
This is a time to Reflect, Care and Heal.***