

COVID-19: Myths and facts



FAST FACTS

- COVID-19 is a new virus which has spread quickly to many countries around the world including in Southern Africa.
- Knowing the facts about COVID-19 symptoms, how the virus spreads and what you can do to stop it will help protect you and your community.
- There is a lot of misinformation about COVID-19 so it's important to check information has come from a reliable source such as the [World Health Organization](#) or your government health authority.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new virus which has quickly spread around the world. While initially mainly affecting Asia, Europe and North America, more people are now testing positive in Southern Africa. This is also where the largest number of people are affected by HIV.

Misinformation and myths have been spreading fast, so we asked community health workers from across Southern Africa to share the most common COVID-19 myths and misinformation they have heard. Here we put the record straight:

Symptoms and severity

Will most people who get COVID-19 get very sick or die?

FACT: Most people who get COVID-19 will have a mild form of the illness and recover without needing professional medical care. Around eight out of every 10 people with COVID-19 will have mild symptoms. Around one in six people will become severely ill and need hospital care. Scientific

modelling suggests that around 1 in 100 people who get COVID-19 will die.

Can you always tell if someone has COVID-19?

FACT: No The virus can be in someone's body for up to 14 days before they get symptoms, and some people will have such a mild case of COVID-19 that they might not notice that anything is wrong. That's why it's important that everyone follows government advice – including hand washing, using tissues to catch coughs and sneezes, and avoiding crowds – to stop the spread of the virus, even if they feel healthy.

Who's at risk?

Can Black and African people get COVID-19?

FACT: Anyone can get COVID-19, regardless of race or skin colour. Older people and people with other health conditions, such as asthma, heart diseases and diabetes, are more at risk of getting seriously ill.

Does COVID-19 only affect old people, meaning young people don't have to worry?

FACT: While COVID-19 can be more dangerous in older people, anyone can get it including young people, some of whom become seriously ill. While we don't yet fully understand why some people get more serious symptoms, we do know that young people are more likely to develop serious symptoms if they have certain underlying health conditions, for example asthma, heart conditions or untreated HIV.

Are people living with HIV more likely to get seriously ill?

FACT: If you are [living with HIV](#) and on effective treatment there's no evidence that you are at higher risk of developing serious COVID-19 symptoms. This is because your treatment will be keeping your immune system strong and your body able to deal with infections. If you are worried that you might have HIV, now is a good time [to get tested](#) so you can start treatment if you need it.

Prevention, treatment and cure

Will antiretroviral treatment (ART) for HIV stop me getting COVID-19?

FACT: There is no evidence that taking anti-HIV drugs will stop you getting COVID-19. Although some ART drugs are being trialled for use to treat COVID-19, there is no evidence yet that they are effective for this purpose.

If you are living with HIV and taking treatment it's important that you follow the [general advice to reduce the spread of COVID-19](#). Keep taking your treatment to ensure your immune system stays strong. You shouldn't share your HIV drugs with anyone else who has COVID-19 or is worried about getting it. These should only be taken if prescribed by a doctor.

Can COVID-19 spread in warm sunny weather?

FACT: COVID-19 can survive temperatures higher than 25C. You can catch it no matter how sunny and

warm it is. So, whatever the weather you should follow the official advice to protect yourself from the virus.

Getting out into the sunshine, if you can, is still a good idea as this helps your body produce vitamin D which is important for your immune system.

Will drinking lots of hot drinks stop COVID-19?

FACT: There is no drink hot or cold that will protect you from COVID-19 or cure the illness. So far, there's no proven cure for COVID-19 but most people recover by themselves. Taking paracetamol, drinking lots of liquids, and getting enough rest can help you manage your symptoms.

Should I use a strong disinfectant to clean my hands and body to protect myself from COVID-19?

FACT: You shouldn't use strong disinfectant to clean your body. Washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water or rubbing an alcohol-based sanitizer on them will stop the virus spreading. Using stronger chemicals on your skin can be dangerous. Never drink disinfectant or hand sanitizer as this can do serious damage.

Can Chloroquine cure COVID-19?

FACT: At the moment there is no proven cure for COVID-19, but most people will recover on their own without needing professional medical care. If you think you have COVID-19 and are having difficulty breathing, contact your local health facility as you will need professional medical care.

As scientists and doctors continue their work to understand and treat COVID-19 our knowledge of, and ability to treat and prevent the virus will improve. For now, it's important to follow official government advice and get information only from reliable sources like Avert.org, the World Health Organization (WHO) or your government's health department.

HELP US HELP OTHERS

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Sources:

World Health Organization

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