



Increase in Covid-19 Infections & Covid-19 Vaccination Update

Dear Sasbo Member,

We trust that this communication finds you and your loved ones in good health.

The number of new positive cases has increased quite significantly in the last 24 hours to 11 535 infections and 33 973 infections this week. We are deeply concerned with the growing number and the fact that the Omicron variant mutation of the SARS-CoV-2 has far more mutations than any previous variant. Preliminary studies have indicated that it is almost 3 times more infectious than the previous Delta variant. Gauteng is once again at the epicentre. The numbers in the other provinces are tapering up. Overall, the 7-day average has increased to 12.6%, with the latest positivity rate currently standing at 22,4%.

Tragically, the mortality rate has also increased, with 124 fatalities reported this week, taking the total number of deaths arising from Covid-19 to 89,915, whilst the total number of positive cases has also grown to almost 3 million to date.

Hospital admissions to the order of 274 have been recorded in the past 24 hours. This growing trend is noted with serious concern as we appear to be in the fourth wave of infections of this devastating pandemic. We continue to keep in our prayers all those who are ill and we sadly extend our condolences to the families of all who have succumbed to the Corona virus.

The S.A. Government's mass vaccination programme has registered significant progress, with in total more than 26,109,436 (26 million) people having received their first jabs. According to the latest Government statistics, a total of 42,58% of the South African Adult population have received their first vaccination with 36,79% having been fully vaccinated thus far. It must, however, be noted that we still have a long way to go in terms of achieving herd immunity in our country.

As we write to you, the second phase of the Sisonke vaccination programme amongst healthcare workers is underway on the administration of the booster Johnson & Johnson vaccine and this is welcomed as it will ensure our safety.

The SA President, His Excellency, Cyril Ramaphosa in his address on Sunday, 28 November indicated, amongst others, that: *"As individuals, as companies and as government, we have a responsibility to ensure that all people in this country can work, travel and socialise safely. We have therefore been undertaking engagements with social partners and other stakeholders on introducing measures that make vaccination a condition for access to workplaces, public events, public transport and public establishments. This includes discussions that have been taking place at NEDLAC between government, labour, business and the community constituency, where there is broad agreement on the need for such measures. Government has set up a task team that will undertake broad consultations on making vaccination mandatory for specific activities and locations. The task team will report to the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Vaccination chaired by the Deputy President, which will make recommendations to Cabinet on a fair and sustainable approach to vaccine mandates."*

We are noting with serious concern that more and more corporates, including some financial institutions, are implementing a mandatory vaccination policy. Whilst Sasbo has and will continue to encourage our members to vaccinate, so that we achieve herd immunity in our country and, through such, be in a better position to safeguard all of our best interests, which is to protect our lives, our health and our livelihoods as a people, we respect the constitutional rights and individual choice and therefore we remain principally against mandatory vaccination. **Sasbo Cares** and will endeavour to support our members where required and in need.

We once again encourage our members to register on the EVDS or any other applicable system/vaccine portal based on the requirements that may be applicable to you. Sasbo is continuing to also engage with individual financial institutions on worksite and mobile vaccination programs, in order to make vaccinations more accessible. Please look out for further details and updates on this matter.

Please contact the **Sasbo Covid-19 Info & Support Line** through Europ Assist. Members have access to qualified nurses 24 hours a day and qualified doctors from 08h00 to 20h00. Virtual consultations are also part of the package at no additional cost. We encourage members to call **0860 111 000** should you have questions or wish to obtain more **credible information or professional advice** regarding, amongst others, the Corona Virus, the vaccine, quarantine or isolation protocols, etc.

Let's continue practicing **social distancing**, wearing your **face mask** at all times, to observe **personal hygiene** by regularly and thoroughly **sanitising or washing your hands** and to strictly adhere to all the health and safety risk mitigatory measures in your workplace in terms of the relevant regulations. We cannot afford to be complacent now. Remember this too shall pass, just like all other adversities we have overcome!

Safety, wellness and life first!

Modime Joe Kokela
General Secretary

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