

EMPLOYER NEWSLETTER

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DEAR EMPLOYER

Reflecting on 2020, it's hard for many people to believe that the year finally ended – and somehow there was an expectation that Covid-19 would also expire at the end of the year, which subconsciously led many of us to let down our guard. However, what we didn't expect was a resurgence in the form of the dreaded second wave, which wreaked havoc on many families and caused the number of deaths to rise sharply during what can only be described as the bleakest festive season in our lifetimes.

Businesses that were just starting to recover listened for the president's address, which brought about renewed restrictions in trade and movement and the feeling was all too familiar that we had entered another period of vigilance and imminent danger. While there are differing opinions on the restrictions put in place, if we have to look at the outcome of a reduced infection rate, we can all agree to some extent that the decisions taken saved lives – and we can appreciate the fact that we

had overcome the second wave, albeit not without personal tragedy for some of us, our friends, colleagues and extended family.

Since the start of 2021, the hotly contested topic of discussion has revolved around the Covid-19 vaccine and the rollout plan of government to try and prioritise the rollout to citizens who are at greater risk of infection and need to be vaccinated earlier. The country's healthcare workers, who have put their lives on the line since the start of the pandemic, are the first in line to be protected and deservedly so, as the deaths among these everyday heroes are far too high and require an immediate response. For the rest of us, we need to take the necessary precautions until it is time for us to receive the vaccine (which is a personal decision for some who are not comfortable to do so, and that is also their right).

In this issue, we will examine the vaccination rollout in broad terms, the issue of testing for Covid-19 and the criteria required to qualify for a test, and lastly looking at ways in which to cope with the stresses associated with the pandemic and its effect on our lives. We hope you will enjoy the topics covered and, should you wish to see specific topics covered in future editions, please email your suggestions to: Eugene.eakduth@momentum.co.za

COVID-19 VACCINE & WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ITS ROLLOUT

There has been much information in the news around the vaccine and its rollout to the country. Firstly, all vaccines are subject to extensive testing at the National Control Laboratory to ensure safety first for human use. Only once a vaccine has been approved by this organisation is it allowed to be put into circulation.

Government's rollout plan is essentially **divided into three phases**, which starts with the protection of **healthcare workers**, which number roughly 1.25 million individuals. There will be a total of 1.3 million vaccines set aside for this purpose, which takes into account spoilages and damages to vaccines in transit.





The **second phase** includes the following individuals: **essential workers, persons in congregate settings, persons over 60 years of age and persons over the age of 60 with co-morbidities**, i.e. persons who may have chronic illnesses that put them at risk of developing complications. The total population expected to fall in these categories will have a total of 16.6 million vaccines allocated to them and, as in the first phase, the allocation will include provision for damaged and spoiled vaccines caused in transit.

During the final phase, persons **older than 18 years of age, the largest group of citizens**, will be vaccinated with an allocated total of 22.5 million vaccines. Once the three phases are complete, it is anticipated that the country will achieve 'herd immunity' or, according to the president, '**population immunity**', as there would be approximately 40.4 million citizens vaccinated.

The exact timelines are unknown at this stage, but this project is expected to run for the duration of 2021, subject to change as new and unexpected events unfold. If all goes according to plan, the **last phase is expected to start in 2022**, whereby all citizens **younger than 18 years** of age will be vaccinated.

The proposal from Government is that the **cost of the vaccines be shared among medical schemes, Government and businesses**, but there will be more detail around this funding mechanism in due time.

COVID-19 TESTING CRITERIA

THE TOPIC OF TESTING FOR COVID-19 IS VERY SENSITIVE AS IT IS A VERY EMOTIVE ISSUE.

Everyone has the right to feel safe and to know whether they may be at risk, but there is a list of globally accepted criteria for testing, as published by the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD). These criteria are known to healthcare practitioners in South Africa and around the world and are based on sound research and experience with this virus.

Moto Health Care funds the cost of tests that meet the NICD criteria and has communicated this to all its members. However, the Scheme has recently been alerted to a concerning trend among certain employers who are insisting that their staff go for testing in order to obtain a clearance certificate to return to work. Please note that diagnostic tests that don't meet the NICD criteria are not covered by the Scheme and, as a result, employees have to bear the full costs of these tests. Many employees have raised their concerns with the Scheme in this regard, as they are frustrated at having to pay for a test that revealed they were not infected with the virus.

Moto Health Care appeals to all employers to be mindful of this request and to familiarise themselves with the NICD criteria before subjecting their staff to go for mandatory testing, which costs anything from R500 to R1 000 and can severely impact an employee's finances. The Scheme thanks you in advance for your understanding in this very sensitive matter.





COPING WITH THE STRESS OF COVID-19 & ITS EFFECTS



BY NOW, MOST OF US HAVE BEEN LIVING IN LOCKDOWN FOR ALMOST A YEAR.

That is a long time to be affected by a communicable disease and naturally many of us, our families, colleagues and friends have come to accept this as the new normal. Since humans are mostly social, it can become overwhelming for us not to thrive in our natural element and this can lead to frustration, depression, anxiety and loneliness. To assist you with the pitfalls of stress relating to the pandemic, we have listed a few helpful hints below that may assist you and your staff in coping better!

1.

Remember to stay safe: maintain a safe physical distance from others, adhere to good hygiene practices and wear your mask at all times. If a person is not able to physically protect him or herself, there is little point in offering them emotional support. Safety and peace of mind around safety provides a huge mental boost to those who may be fearful of this virus, and is the first step towards achieving a good mental state. Make sure you provide the necessary support structures for your employees via employee assistance programmes or external counselling programmes.

2.

Limit your exposure to media, as there are too many fake news stories being spread via social media. An information overload causes a person to over-analyse a situation or dwell on a subject. We have become so accustomed to expecting bad news that we do not realise how pessimistic we have become about what is happening around us. While it is quite easy to spread sensational headlines and share alarming news, take a step back and decide whether the recipient you are sharing information with is emotionally ready to receive such details. For example, if one of your contacts has recently lost someone to the virus and you come across an article that blames the number of deaths on lack of treatment and resources, think carefully about whether such news will uplift or upset the person before sharing it.

3.

There is a difference between **physical distancing** and being socially distant. Physical distancing protects us from infection, but this does not mean that you have to stop checking up on a loved one or colleague. Interactive media formats are extensively used for work but, there is no restriction on connecting with someone on a personal level with these tools in your own time. Employers with employees working from home may need to set aside some personal catch-up sessions with staff, particularly those staff that live alone and have no other human interaction or support at their homes.

4.

We need to also find new ways of expressing kindness and thoughtfulness to our colleagues and family, whether we send them an electronic card or order a token of appreciation through a multitude of vendors who provide these services. When businesses were operating normally, many employers provided little tokens of appreciation, such as Friday lunches and company-branded gifts to staff to keep them motivated, but these gestures have all but disappeared nowadays. We must remember not to let the things that made our organisation special to work for become a thing of the past. Just because you don't have your employees close to you, doesn't mean that you can't celebrate their special milestones, such as birthdays, work anniversaries, graduations and other events with them!

5.

Feed yourself well! This phrase may seem to encourage gluttony, but in truth it means that you should maintain a balanced diet. Studies have shown that junk food, which is high in carbohydrates and sugar, is linked to depression, as these foods cause temporary highs that are not ideal for concentration and reasoning. As an employer, if you run a work canteen, review your menu to offer your staff healthier alternatives that not only keep them physically healthy, but also mentally stimulated. The benefits of a Mediterranean diet, which is high in vegetables, fruit, whole grain, beans, nuts and seeds and olive oil have been well documented, so this may be worth looking into.

THE LAST WORD

FINALLY, IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT IN THE MIDST OF CONFUSION, DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY, THERE ARE SUCCESSES THAT NEED TO BE CELEBRATED.

Many people complete their studies, see their children start or finish school or graduate, or have been promoted. These momentous personal events must not be lost within the greater context of the pandemic.

Importantly, we are starting to see breakthroughs in vaccine development and greater awareness of the virus, which is equipping people to better manage their risk of contracting the virus by adopting the precautionary measures indicated by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Government.

2021 may not have started like we planned, but we can write its end and we must always remember this. As a Scheme dedicated solely to the needs of stakeholders in the motor industry, we will always support and guide you to achieve the best healthcare for your staff and we thank you for your continued support!

