



COVID-19: ALCOHOL AND CIGARETTES FACT SHEET

1. SALE OF ALCOHOL AND CIGARETTES

The sale of alcohol and cigarettes is prohibited.

- The ban on the sale of alcohol and cigarette will remain in place throughout the lockdown period.
- The ban was not implemented lightly; government carefully weighed the potential impact of the loss of alcohol and cigarette revenue.
- However, the benefits of the continued prohibition on the sale of alcohol and cigarette far outweighs any short-term financial gain.
- The purpose of the lockdown is to save lives and protect the health and well-being of our people.

Alcohol-related injuries burden our clinics and hospitals.

- The resumption of alcohol sales has resulted in substantial pressure being put on hospitals including trauma and ICU units.
- This is due to increased motor vehicle accidents, violence and related trauma injuries that occur mostly at night.
- Research shows that there was a notable decrease in violent crimes when the sale of alcohol was initially banned under lockdown.
- The lockdown regulations and alcohol ban effectively reduced the pressure on trauma units by 40-50 per cent.
- Many of the cases treated by trauma units on a typical weekend in South Africa, prior to the lockdown were alcohol related.
- The WHO has supported efforts to limit alcohol consumption during the pandemic.
- The WHO said that existing rules and regulations to protect health and reduce harm caused by alcohol should be upheld and even reinforced during the COVID-19 pandemic and emergency situations.
- The WHO has further encouraged governments to enforce measures, which limit alcohol consumption.

Alcohol abuse destroys lives and families.

- Alcohol abuse causes major health, social and economic hardship in South Africa.
- Alcohol abuse destroys the social fabric of society and leads to the disintegration of families and the destruction of lives.
- Contact crimes in South Africa (murder, attempted murder, assault and sexual offences) are often preceded by alcohol abuse.

- The high prevalence of alcohol and drug abuse among adults in South Africa is responsible for the destruction of families, communities and society.
- After the lifting of the ban of alcohol, the number of trauma patients requiring ICU or High Care admission in the Western Cape increased from a daily average of 2.7 to a daily average of 9.5 admissions per day. (This is a 350 per cent increase in trauma patients requiring ICU/High Care admission).
- The average number of daily deaths from Road Traffic Accidents increased from 1.44 to 3.77. (This is an increase of 260 per cent)
- The resumption of alcohol sales resulted in a 62 per cent increase in daily trauma cases presented to emergency centres in the Western Cape.
- Trauma admissions increased by 54 per cent, trauma ICU admissions by 350 per cent and trauma deaths in the EC increased by 308 per cent.

Smokers are at higher risk from the Coronavirus.

- A review of studies by public health experts convened by WHO in April 2020 found that smokers are more likely to develop severe disease with COVID-19, compared to non-smokers.
- COVID-19 is an infectious disease that primarily attacks the lungs. Smoking impairs lung function making it harder for the body to fight off coronaviruses and other diseases.
- Smokers are likely to be more vulnerable to COVID-19 as the act of smoking means that fingers (and possibly contaminated cigarettes) are in contact with lips, which increases the possibility of transmission of the virus from hand to mouth.
- Smokers may also already have lung disease or reduced lung capacity, which would greatly increase risk of serious illness.
- The WHO recommends people quit smoking as it makes them more vulnerable to COVID-19 infection and takes longer to recover.
- The benefits of quitting smoking are almost immediate. Within 24 hours of quitting, the body starts to recover and repair. Lung function improves and respiratory symptoms become less severe.
- Respiratory infections such as bronchitis and pneumonia also decrease with quitting.