



## 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.