



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



MEDIA STATEMENT

To: Editors & Health Journalists

Issued by: Department of Health

Date: Tuesday, 23 November 2021

Health Department adds antigen tests on the line list of Covid-19 statistics

Pretoria: The Department of Health has added the rapid antigen tests on the line of COVID-19 statistics, with effect from today. Testing for SARS-Co-V-2 in South Africa is based on the gold standard of a laboratory confirmed PCR test. Initially all COVID-19 positive cases were diagnosed through this method. In October 2020 rapid antigen tests were approved by SAHPRA for use and have been increasingly used by health care professionals to diagnose COVID-19.

These rapid antigen tests have been offered across the country in both the private and public sector and through the mobile laboratories of the NHLS across the country. These tests provide easier access to testing and provide results within 15 -20 minutes of testing. Multiple manufacturers are now producing these tests and use them for testing in line with SAHPRA`s approval.

The country`s COVID-19 surveillance data is premised on capturing laboratory confirmed case data of both the PCR and rapid COVID-19 antigen tests. Through ongoing efforts to ensure the best available surveillance data for decision-making, the department is aware of a number of COVID-19 antigen tests from various sources that have not been incorporated into the laboratory information system. The identification of these additional data are not unusual as data cleaning, quality checks and endeavours for completeness are ongoing processes.

As of 8 November 2021, we have identified approximately 75 000 antigen tests that need to be captured into the database, of these tests about 20 813 were diagnosed as positive for SARS-CoV-2.

It is important to note that the retrospective incorporation of these positive cases into the surveillance data will have no impact on case management and follow-up as patient is immediately informed of a positive test result.

There have been extensive engagements with the National Incident Management Team, the Provinces, the NHLS and the NICD, and we have included these data on the 22 November, so that it would reflect on today`s report.

As we report test data and case numbers for the past 24 hours through our outbreak reporting system, we will observe an increase in a single day, which will create a distortion of the 7-day moving average and an unusual spike on the reporting epidemic curve.

The department remains committed to providing the best available data to both decision makers and the South African public.

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