



# NATIONAL NEWS FLASH



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## COVID-19, AGE AND COMORBIDITIES

The Minister of Basic Education is expected to make a further announcement on the re-opening of schools today, 19 May 2020.

Two of the areas that NAPTOSA has been adamant should be clarified by the DBE before there is to be a return to school by educators are age and comorbidities.

In this respect the following guidelines, based on medical advice, have been received from the Department:

### RISK FACTORS FOR SEVERE COVID-19

Risk Factor	Detail	Definition
Age	People 60 years and older with comorbidities	Aged 60 years or older with one or more disorders or conditions.
People of all ages with the following underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled:		
Cardiovascular Disease	Moderate/ Severe Hypertension	Moderate hypertension: systolic BP 160-179mmHg and/or diastolic BP 100-109 mmHg. Severe hypertension: systolic BP $\geq$ 180 mmHg and/or diastolic BP $\geq$ 110 mmHg.
	Congestive cardiac failure or other serious cardiovascular disease	Confirmed clinical diagnosis of congestive cardiac failure or other serious cardiovascular disease.
	Cerebrovascular disease, including stroke and transient ischaemic attack	Confirmed clinical diagnosis of cerebrovascular disease.
Respiratory Disease	Pulmonary Tuberculosis – untreated or in early treatment	People who have not completed the intensive phase or first two months of treatment in line with the National Department of Health Standard Treatment Guidelines.
	Moderate to severe asthma	Asthma which requires treatment with high dose inhaled corticosteroids plus a second controller (and/or systemic corticosteroids) to prevent it

		from becoming 'uncontrolled' or which remains 'uncontrolled' despite this therapy.
	Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)	Confirmed clinical diagnosis of COPD
	Other severe chronic lung pathology, including cystic fibrosis and bronchiectasis	Confirmed clinical diagnosis – irrespective of severity.
Kidney Disease	Chronic Kidney Disease	eGFR < 45
Pregnancy	Third trimester pregnancy	Estimated to be further than week 27 of pregnancy
Immunosuppression	Poorly controlled type II Diabetes Mellitus	HBA1c $\geq$ 7.5% within last 6 months
	Cancer undergoing active treatment	Currently undergoing chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy
	Human Immunodeficiency Virus with advanced immunosuppression	HIV positive persons with CD4 count <200 cells/mm <sup>3</sup> who are ART-naïve or who initiated ART within last 3 months
	Chronic immunosuppressant use	Chronic use of corticosteroids of >20mg prednisone per day or equivalent, methotrexate, biologicals or other immunosuppressants.
	Transplant	On chronic immunosuppressants
Metabolic syndrome	Severe obesity	Body mass index (MBI) of 40 and higher

From the above it is clear that, should these guidelines be introduced as policy (we await official announcement in this regard), comorbidities, and not only age, will be the factors that will determine an educator's inability to return to work and therefore require him/her to work from home.

Members will be kept informed on this and other re-opening of school matters, as they unfold.

**B.L. MANUEL**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**