



OLDER PERSONS WEEK

KEY MESSAGES

BRIEF:

South Africa will commemorate Older Persons Week from 27 September to 4 October and Active Ageing Week from 25 to 31 October 2020. Older Persons Week is used to recognise the contributions of older persons and to address issues that specifically affect them. Active Aging Week on the other hand highlights the capabilities of older persons as fully participating members of society and encourages them to participate in simple exercises.

This year's commemoration comes as the COVID-19 infection in the country continues to decline and we have moved to Alert Level 1. Evidence shows that the elderly are at significantly greater risk of complications from the virus and as a society, we should take steps to protect them from the pandemic.

KEY MESSAGES	SUPPORTING STATEMENTS
<i>Let us continue to support and protect older persons during the COVID-19 pandemic period.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Older persons are at significantly greater risk of complications from COVID-19 and let us all check in with them at least once daily to ensure all is well.• We urge all South Africans to do something distinctive for our senior citizens in recognition of their contribution to society.• Older persons tend to be the glue that holds our families together, they often look after children while young parents either work or study.• Some work in both paid and unpaid jobs and making a significant contribution to the economic development of their communities.• They also volunteer their time and expertise to organisations that operate within their community to the benefit of a greater number of people.• Through our interaction with older persons, we also learn and gain invaluable knowledge that is not contained in any book.• As they reach their twilight years, we need to cherish and take care of them when they are no longer able to cope with the demands of everyday life.• We must support older persons, promote, protect and advance their rights in our areas of influence.
<i>The health and well-being of older persons takes priority.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The relevant government departments will continue to support older persons in obtaining essential services.• We must work to ensure that older persons continue to engage with others through phone calls and texts for the benefit of good social and mental health.

KEY MESSAGES	SUPPORTING STATEMENTS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We further encourage essential service providers to support the elderly by establishing exclusive hours to buy necessities. • We must continue to observe physical distancing and observe all safety protocols, especially when visiting older persons. • Irresponsible behaviour during the pandemic places our elderly parents, grandparents and those who suffer from comorbidities at greater risk.
<i>We appreciate the role of caregivers assisting older persons during COVID-19.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caregivers assisting older persons including medical professionals are the first line in keeping the elderly safe and preventing the spread of the virus. • As government, we applaud them for putting the needs of the elderly first and we call on them to ensure that they are equipped with the tools to carry out their jobs. • Caregivers are essential in ensuring older persons continue to access services and goods during the lockdown. • We must continue to ensure that caregivers assist older persons with disabilities to access their social grants and to do shopping. • We call on caregivers to practice extra precaution and for the family to consider having alternatives person to care for their loved one in case the caregiver gets sick.
<i>We are making steady progress in promoting healthy lives and well-being for all South Africans.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This rise in life expectancy has also seen older persons making up a larger proportion of the population than before. • This improvement puts South Africa on track to achieve the goal of the National Development Plan, which is to increase life expectancy to 70 by 2030. • According to the 2020 Mid-year population estimates report from Stats SA, life expectancy in the country has been on the increase since 2007. • Life expectancy at birth for 2020 is estimated at 62,5 years for males and 68,5 years for females. • The report is in line with the 2018 World Health Organisation, which also showed a rise in life expectancy.
<i>Government is committed to promoting healthy lifestyles.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government call on all South Africans to prevent the spread of non-communicable and chronic lifestyle diseases such as hypertension, diabetes and heart disease. • The majority of non-communicable diseases are caused by poor life-style choices, including poor diet and a lack of physical activity. • We can reduce the risk of lifestyle diseases through improved nutrition and improved physical activity. • The social benefits of physical activity include long-term health benefits, stronger and more secure communities, closer family units and better social cohesion. • We commend sports and recreation clubs that actively encourage the elderly to take up a healthy lifestyle and call upon others to do so.