

Covid-19 awareness in school transport

As Grade 7 and Grade 12 pupils return to school this week. Along with the employees who also returned to work under Level 3 Lockdown on 1 June 2020, it is expected that roads will be busier. Students will also need to follow strict rules when travelling to schools in order to comply with regulation and stay healthy.



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There are a number of rules that will apply to the various modes of school transport. "Parents who drive their children in their own cars need to follow the rules that applied during other levels: wear face masks, sanitise the vehicle and ensure there is ventilation. It has not yet been clarified what rules apply to parents that will have more than three occupants in the car," says Eugene Herbert, managing director of MasterDrive.

"MasterDrive does encourage wearing your masks in the vehicle even if you were in lockdown together. Parents can make use of our diagram on sanitising vehicles as well. Consider opening windows rather than using the air-con or having no air circulating in the car. Remember, children can bring the virus into the car with them which can have detrimental consequences for more vulnerable family members."

More clarity has been provided on public transport because of the risk it presents in spreading Covid-19. "Talk to your children and explain exactly what process to follow when using public transport and what to do to protect themselves. Face masks and sanitising of hands before entering the vehicle is mandatory."

The number of passengers allowed to enter the vehicle is limited to 70% of the usual capacity:

- A taxi normally carrying 10 passengers can only carry seven.
- A taxi normally carrying 15 passengers may only seat 10.
- A small bus that carries 22 passengers can now only transport 15.

Encourage your child to be aware of the regulations placed on the transport sector. "If they notice that something is not being done, for example, sanitisation or passengers are not wearing masks, then make it clear that it is acceptable for them to not get into that public transport vehicle."

Face masks, load requirements and sanitisation rules apply to all modes of transport. "If your child uses a ride-sharing service to get to school or they travel to school with friends, the same rules apply. All students are now also required to have permits confirming that they are travelling to school. This will be issued by the heads of the school.

"Stress the importance of following these regulations to protect their health and prevent an uncontrollable spread of Covid-19. Explain the importance of the rules, so that when your child decides whether or not to get into a vehicle, they make an informed and educated decision."

The recent court ruling declaring the lockdown unconstitutional and invalid has created much uncertainty. "Until advised otherwise, however, it is in the best interest of families to follow the transportation rules as many of them have been recommended as effective means to protect yourself from the virus as much as possible.

"While the youth are believed to fare better with Covid-19, a rapid spread of the virus through public transport, and consequently through schools, could create a major problem for South Africa as a whole. We all have a role to play in ensuring this does not happen," says Herbert.

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