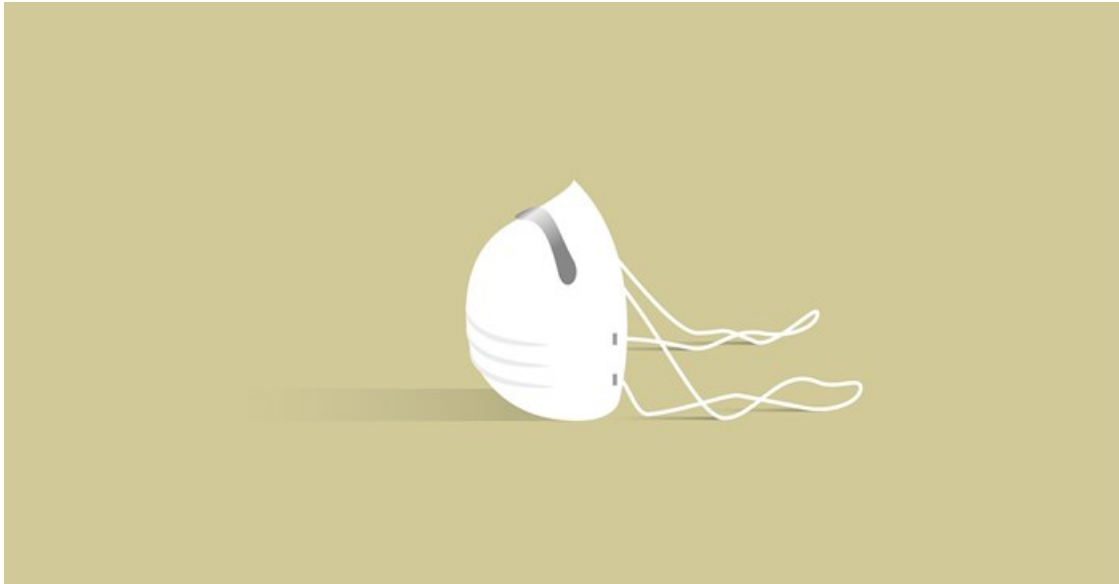


# Western Cape's fourth wave: have we peaked?

By  Katja Hamilton

22 Dec 2021

Covid-19 infections are increasing in The Western Cape edging the province closer to reaching the peak of its fourth wave.



Source: [Pixabay](#)

And yet, all indications from the healthcare platform are that - across the province - the rate of increase is slowing.

This is according to premier Alan Winde.

He explained that the reproduction or “R” number remains above 1 but is now declining.

"This means that the increase rate of the number of new infections is slowing. Deaths remain low with under two deaths a day," he said.

He cautioned that while the indications are positive, we are not yet out of the woods.

## **Increases in daily new cases**

"We continue to see increases in the number of daily new cases with on average 3 383 new diagnoses a day, while the

proportion of positive Covid-19 tests has increased to an average of 51%."

Meanwhile, hospital admissions are increasing with 138 admissions a day.



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"We are seeing sustained week-on-week increases of over 20% in hospital admissions, although these percentage increases are starting to decline, and we are continuing to cope with the demand," Winde says. "The current number of Covid-19 hospitalisations total at 826 based on a seven-day-moving average.

"We are coping because, in anticipation of a fourth wave, we established a six-point resurgence plan. This plan uses hospital capacity as the most important measure, triggering and upscaling in its resource capacity to ensure we are always able to care for those in need."

## Hospital occupancy

Winde confirmed that the Metro hospitals have an average bed occupancy rate of 87%; George drainage-area hospitals are at 69%; Paarl drainage-area hospitals are at 70% and Worcester drainage-area hospitals are at 68%. The critical-care bed occupancy rate for designated Covid-19 beds for the province is at 13%.

Covid-19 positive persons, and those under investigation cases currently make up 21% of all available acute general-hospital capacity in both Metro and rural regional hospital drainage areas.

## Covid-19 intermediate care

The Brackengate Hospital of Hope currently has 113 patients with a bed occupancy rate of 33.6%. Sonstraal, Freesia and Ward 99, and Mitchells Plain Hospital of Hope currently have no patients.

In line with the province's triggered escalation response to intermediate care beds, Winde is ensuring that The Brackengate intermediate care facility is now in the process of being fully commissioned.

"We are currently at 33.6% capacity at Brackengate. Once we reach 50% capacity at Brackengate, we will commission the Mitchells Plain Hospital of Hope which has 200 beds. This will be done on a ward-by-ward basis against Covid-19 admissions. Sonstraal and Harry Comay intermediate care facilities will be commissioned as required depending on the number of Covid-19 admissions."



## HFA hits back amid PCR-test price storm

Katja Hamilton 15 Dec 2021



Winde urges residents to stay safe over the festive season.

"We must remain vigilant and prevent the spread of the virus through the lifesaving behaviours we have learned throughout the pandemic. By taking these protective measures, you will be playing your part in saving lives and jobs - keeping case numbers low, while keeping key industries open which thrive during this time of year, including the tourism and hospitality sectors.

## Relying on science

"We are continuing to monitor the impact of Omicron on our healthcare platform and call on the scientific community to conclude their research speedily. We are awaiting robust evidence to prevent making premature conclusions and to guide our response.

"What we have learnt, on a preliminary basis, to date is that a high proportion of re-infections occurs with Omicron. We are also seeing that the proportion of cases with severe disease to date has been lower. This could be due predominantly to younger people getting infected, who are at lower risk of severe disease.

"It is important to note there is no clear evidence that Omicron causes less severe disease in unvaccinated people without prior infection. The proportion of those who are infected and who get severe illness is smaller. This may be due to prior infection or vaccination, but those studies must still be completed.

"This means that it is still important and necessary for you to get vaccinated, should you have not already done so. Vaccines appear to still provide strong protection against severe disease from Omicron, and remain our best defence.

"Please do not delay and get vaccinated."

## ABOUT KATJA HAMILTON

Katja is the Finance, Property and Healthcare Editor at Bizcommunity.

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