



South African Optometric Association

South Africa will be moving from Alert Level 4 to level 3 of the lockdown on 1 June 2020, as announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa on Sunday 24 May 2020. The President indicated that the nationwide lockdown, to date, had been effective to slow the spread of Covid-19, but it could not be sustained indefinitely. Of particular relevance is that he also warned that the coronavirus pandemic will probably get worse, before it gets better.

In practical terms, the shift from Level 4 to Level 3 represents significant degrees of relaxation of the lockdown regulations as well as a further reopening of the economy which permits sectors such as wholesale and retail to return to work. Once again, reference was made to medical facilities permitted to remain open.

The following principles were highlighted:

- Companies will be asked to phase in the reopening and to put in place a workplan with all the necessary health precautions
- Simple hygiene practices, such as the regular washing of hands, wearing a face mask, keeping at least a 1.5 metre distance from other people, avoiding touching the face with unwashed hands, and cleaning surfaces regularly were the most effective defence against the coronavirus.
- The wearing of masks outside the home environment remains compulsory
- Employees and employees over the age of 60 years are encouraged to work from home where possible as are employers/employees with underlying medical conditions such as diabetes or conditions of a cardio-vascular or respiratory nature.
- The curfew, as previously imposed during level 4, will be lifted
- No more restrictions on outdoor exercise
- Conferences and gatherings remain prohibited
- Inter-provincial travel remains prohibited (Domestic travel for business purposes, however, will be permitted)

The following are the views of the SAOA Board:

- 1. Optometric practices may remain open to the public and patients during level 3 as deemed appropriate by each and every practitioner.**
- 2. The reopening of the economy for various industry sectors translates into many thousands of South Africans returning to work. This represents a significant increase in exposure to infection.**
- 3. The role of optometrists and Dispensing Opticians as frontline, primary health care providers in combatting the spread of the COVID-19 virus should not be under-estimated.**

4. Practitioners are to ensure that they and their staff strictly adhere to safety protocols. In this regard, practitioners are advised to adopt the guidelines as prepared by the SAOA for the protection of themselves, their families, their staff and their patients.

President Cyril Ramaphosa aptly concluded his address on Sunday by using the words of the late President Nelson Mandela when he said, “it is now in your hands”, to urge the country to help curb the deadly disease as the ban of movement is relaxed.

These words, of course, are applicable to the professions of Optometry and Dispensing Opticianry.

STAY SAFE

Best Regards,

SAOA TEAM

PS. The above represents the views and position of the SAOA Board, at this time, based on available information. The SAOA will continue to monitor developments and engage extensively with the relevant role-players with the view of keeping our members updated.