

What is the COVID-19 pandemic?

Human Coronaviruses are common throughout the world. There are many different coronaviruses identified in animals, but only a small number of these can cause disease in humans.

On 7 January 2020 “Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2” (SARS-CoV-2) was confirmed as the causative (connected) agent of “Coronavirus Disease 2019” or COVID-19. The majority of the case-patients initially identified were dealers and vendors at a seafood, poultry and live wildlife market in China. This suggests that the new coronavirus has a possible zoonotic (animal) origin. There has been ongoing sustained spread of COVID-19 in countries to date – the virus has spread to more than 212 countries, including South Africa.

What is the difference between an outbreak, epidemic and pandemic?

An **outbreak** is a sudden rise in cases of a disease in a particular place.

An **epidemic** is a large outbreak. An epidemic disease is one affecting many persons at the same time, and spreading from person to person in an area where the disease is not permanently dominant. The World Health Organisation (WHO) further specifies epidemics as occurring at the level of a region or community.

A **pandemic** means a global epidemic. The WHO more specifically defines a pandemic as “a worldwide spread of a new disease.”

A timeline of the pandemic from 31 December 2019 to 1 May 2020

31 December 2019	●	Chinese Health officials inform the WHO about a cluster of 41 patients with a mysterious pneumonia. Most are connected to Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market.
1 January 2020	●	Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market closes.
7 January 2020	●	Chinese authorities identify a new type of coronavirus (called “novel coronavirus” or “nCoV”).
11 January 2020	●	China records its first death due to this virus.
13 January 2020	●	First coronavirus case outside of China is reported in Thailand.
23 January 2020	●	Wuhan is placed under quarantine; Hubei province follows within days.



- 30 January 2020** ● WHO declares a global public-health emergency.
- 2 February 2020** ● First death outside China is recorded in the Philippines.
- 11 February 2020** ● WHO announces that the new coronavirus disease will be called "COVID-19".
- 5 March 2020** ● First COVID-19 case officially diagnosed in South Africa.
- 11 March 2020** ● WHO declares the outbreak a pandemic.
- 27 March 2020** ● South Africa institutes a 21-day national lockdown in an attempt to flatten the curve.
- 31 March 2020** ● More than 1/3 of humanity is under some form of lockdown.
- 2 April 2020** ● The world passes 1 million COVID-19 infections.
- 9 April 2020** ● South African president, Cyril Ramaphosa, announces a 2-week extension of its national lockdown.
- 10 April 2020** ● The global death toll surpasses 100,000.
- 15 April 2020** ● The number of global COVID-19 cases surpasses 2 million.
- 1 May 2020** ● Globally, authorities report roughly 3.3 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, with about 1.2 million being active and ongoing cases, roughly 1 million recoveries, and approx. 234,000 deaths.
- 1 May 2020** ● South Africa confirms 5,951 COVID-19 cases. Total number of tests conducted is 217, 522. Recoveries stand at 2,382. 116 COVID-19 deaths.
- 1 May 2020** ● South Africa moves to National Lockdown Level 4 – meaning that some businesses may open, under strict permission and restriction guidelines.