



*Guiding the Profession
Protecting the Public*

**THE SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY OF TRAVEL MEDICINE
POSITION STATEMENT: SARS-CoV-2 ANTIGEN TESTS AND TRAVEL**

18 January 2021

SARS-CoV-2 antigen testing is now available, and many travellers are requesting these tests: it is likely that these requests will increase.

The National Pathology Group of South Africa has published a SARS-CoV-2 antigen test protocol and guidance document, which includes the position of the WHO and the policy adopted by the National Department of Health (NDOH) on this issue.

This document outlines the situation where antigen testing can be implemented, the problems associated with these tests, and states that currently there is insufficient data to recommend the use of antigen testing for routine diagnostic use.

These guidelines are attached for ease of reference.

The following is to be noted:

1. There is a lack of data on the reliability of these tests in asymptomatic individuals;
2. The taking of the appropriate sample is a biosafety risk;
3. The manufacturer's instructions must be accurately followed;
4. Antigen testing should only be considered where RT-PCR is unavailable and or the turn around time is longer than 48 hours;
5. A negative antigen test does not totally exclude active infection;
6. The test result should be confirmed by a RT-PCR test
- 7.

SASTM endorses the NPG, WHO and NDOH statements and urges its members to take cognisance of these statements when providing advice to travellers who seek an antigen test. It is important to remember that any test used MUST be approved by SAHPRA.

Airlines may have different requirements (which may change regularly) and it is up to the individual traveller to ascertain what exactly is required and acceptable, to avoid not being able to travel if the test does not meet these requirements.

Members of SASTM are encouraged to make use of the resources offered to them by SASTM, including Travax, which has useful information regarding entering requirements for the UK and Scotland.

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