

Frequently Asked Questions

1 What is CoughWatchSA all about?

CoughWatchSA is a web application designed for monitoring respiratory illness in South Africa. Anyone in South Africa can take part. Participants are asked to report on a weekly basis if they have any symptoms or not in order to identify possible new spreads of flu (and other respiratory infections). For more information about CWSA, and what it involves, see the project.

2 How should I choose a username and password?

You will need a working email address in order to register which will serve as your username and a chosen password.

If you have forgotten your password or username, you can request a new password through the web platform.

3 Is all data anonymous? Who can see the information I send?

Yes. All data is completely anonymised upon submission, it will not be possible to link the information provided to any individual or household.

4 Where is my data stored?

After being anonymised, data is stored in a secure data layer on our servers (Google Cloud) and only the study team will have access to your data in an anonymised manner.

5 Who are you gathering data for and who benefits?

Two groups benefit from this information immediately. First, citizens like yourself, who gain access to valuable information about respiratory cases in your community. This information allows you to prepare and react quickly to risks in your community. Second, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, for the purpose of preparation, outbreak detection, and targeted response.

6 Can I invite my colleagues, peers or family?

Yes, please invite as many others as you can. More data means more powerful models and better outputs and results.

7 Can I answer the survey for other people?

Yes, only on behalf of your children if you are the parent or legal guardian. You will register using a valid email account and through your account, you can add other profiles which will be recognised as users linked to your account.

8 What if I am away or unable to answer the survey for some time? Will I be disqualified?

No, please just resume answering the survey as soon as possible. The survey links are sent via email so you can complete these anywhere in the world.

9 Can I change my email address?

No, accounts are linked directly to an email. If you to change your email you would need to create a new account and unsubscribe from the current account.

10 How secure is the system?

All connections are secured using HTTPS. Only encrypted passwords are stored.

11 Will I be able to use the platform offline?

No, you cannot submit your responses offline, but the web platform is zero-rated which means you will not incur any mobile data expenses.

12 Who is eligible to participate in this platform?

Anyone over the age of 18 can participate today and they can now add profiles for their children

13 If I think I have COVID-19, will this platform help me?

No, this platform is for measuring trends and potential problem areas across the population. If you think you have COVID-19 and need medical assistance, please call visit your nearest clinic or consult your doctor

14 If I move to another area, will I be able to update my postal code?

Yes, you will be able to update your postal code through the intake questionnaire.

15 What is ILI?

ILI stands for Influenza-like Illness.

16 I live in the rural areas; will I be able to participate?

Yes, the accuracy of the forecasting depends on having input from a wide range of people - in terms of age, gender, health, and location.

17 Should I report my symptoms when I'm away from home?

Generally, Yes. We often don't know exactly where we were infected, so if in doubt report what you have. Also, we're trying to get people's infection profiles over the whole season. However, when you are moving abroad, we would ask you to stop completing the survey.

18 What questions do you ask in the survey?

CoughWatchSA consists of three questionnaires:

1. An Intake questionnaire, which is completed once and can be updated at any time.
2. A Vaccination questionnaire, which is completed once and can be updated at any time.
3. The 3rd questionnaire is the Weekly symptom survey.

The symptom survey has been designed to ask cough-related symptoms and follow-up questions on health-seeking, any testing done and how long the symptoms last etc.

19 What is the purpose of the intake survey?

The intake questionnaire asks general questions about demographics, and risk factors, such as your age, household size, and underlying medical condition

20 What is the purpose of the weekly symptoms survey? If I didn't have symptoms last week, should I still report this?

The symptom survey asks about respiratory symptoms in the past week, or since you last completed the survey.

If you do not complete the survey in a given week, we don't know whether you are well, or if you simply forgot to complete the survey. Because of this, we ask you to complete the survey even when you have no symptoms.

It's a simple click on "No symptoms" and then "Submit", so it should only take a few seconds of your time. ***NB: knowing no one has symptoms is as important as knowing who has symptoms**

21 Why is it important for me to answer the survey every week?

The system works best with consistent responses from survey users, even if they are healthy in a given week.

22 What is in it for me?

Our model is for a circular flow of data. By providing us with your health information, you in turn gain access to valuable information about health in your community through a dashboard and visualisations.

