SACORONAVIRUS.CO.ZA   BMW to show off iNext electric SUV in November   Advertise   Contact Us   News Leads

Stuff

Reviews ▾   News ▾   How To   Columns   Podcasts & Videos   Win   Read Now ▾

YOU ARE AT: Home   »   News   »   CoughWatchSA: A new COVID-tracking app wants to monitor second wave

CoughWatchSA: A new COVID-tracking app wants to monitor second wave

💬 0

BY **MARCE** ON 29TH OCT 2020   NEWS, APP NEWS
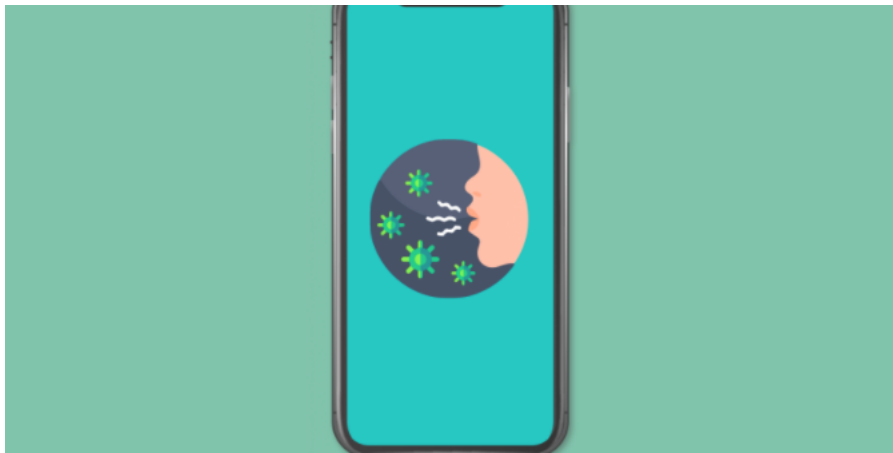
Don't always believe the rumours. Recently, the internet was abuzz with reports of a potential second hard-lockdown. President Cyril Ramaphosa quickly denied the claims, but that doesn't mean the government won't monitor the situation. That's where the new COVID symptom tracking app CoughWatchSA comes in.

The National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) has announced that it is preparing to monitor the potential for the second wave in South Africa using the app, which is still in development. It'll track symptoms that cover a range of diseases like influenza, RSV and COVID-19.

Watch that CoughWatch

"Through the CoughWatchSA application, users can register and report their respiratory symptoms on a weekly basis," the NICD announced in a blog post.

Even though people of South Africa are doing their part to wear masks and implement social distancing, we aren't immune to diseases other than COVID-19. CoughWatchSA will run as a pilot programme for the rest of 2020, after which it'll officially launch as a complementary surveillance platform.

The app will be available to download on both Android and iOS, and will also require users to sign up and report their respiratory symptoms in real-time on a weekly basis. According to the blog post, a similar platform has had effective results in other countries like the US, European countries and Australia in the past ten years.

"This platform is able to detect outbreaks for up to a week or two earlier than traditional surveillance platforms and has been shown to be a complementary disease surveillance platform to current facility-based disease surveillance," the NICD details.

How secure is it?

It's important to note that this app will be used in addition to the existing COVID-19 SA app to track the spread of the virus in our country. Just this time, it's tracking symptoms. Because the app is not yet available, we can't vouch for the security of personal data when using the app, but according to the website it works similarly to the current COVID-19 tracing app in terms of data protocols.

"CoughWatchSA is designed for long-term surveillance of respiratory diseases beyond COVID19, whereas the applications that have been for COVID19 have a specific purpose like contact tracing, symptom tracking and self-screening, which may not be long-term," the NICD website explains.

What worries us is the fact that users need to sign in to the app to use the service, which makes it far harder to keep logged information anonymous. The current tracing app makes use of anonymised keys that can't be traced back to a person or phone number. Once this app launches, we'll do a deep-dive on its security measures.