

# My brush with Covid-19

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by Mercy Karuumombe



WAKE UP CALL ... Mercy Karuumombe, was left at the mercy of ginger and lemon tea to recover from the virus that has seen many dead across the globe.

**IT'S one thing to crave a snack you don't have, but entirely another to have it but can't taste it. That is Covid-19.**

My brush with the virus that has infected almost 112 million people across the globe, and killed almost 2,5 million, started on a Monday, which turned out to be the bluest Monday of 2021.

At around 04h00 an excruciating headache ruined my sleep, so I called in sick.

The next day, I went to the office because I felt guilty for missing work, my head still pounding.

When eating my lunch, I did not immediately realise I could not taste or smell the food.

In fact, my day was rather normal, except for the headache which became my constant companion – until my colleagues told me I was giving them 'the sick vibes'.

## **DOCTOR GOOGLE**

An internet search confirmed they were classic Covid-19 symptoms: the non-stop headache and the sudden loss of taste and smell.

On Wednesday, I decided to brave the queue at Robert Mugabe Clinic in the capital for the test everyone dreads.

When my test was done, I was told to go home and self-isolate.

## **THE NEWS**

After four days of anxious isolation and waiting, my father called me from Otjinene to tell me the news.

The nurse at the clinic had called him, asking him to relay the message that I tested positive.

The form I had to complete at the clinic requesting the details of my next of kin was not for nothing after all.

I slowly digested the news. It was a shock.

I had no clue what to do next. This virus doesn't come with a pamphlet with three easy steps on how to handle a positive test result.

The first thing I did was to tell my family. They seemed calm, too calm, as if catching a killer virus is an everyday occurrence.

Since they didn't appreciate the gravity of my situation, I retreated to my room and posted a note on the door barring the rest of the world entry.

Other relatives called and offered a few home remedies, including steaming, chewing raw garlic, drinking lemon and ginger tea.

I drank the tea and steamed three times a day, but eventually stopped.

I wasn't feeling sick enough to keep exploring everyone's home remedies.

## **ON YOUR OWN, BABY**

I was expecting health officials to guide me through this experience, but they never called.

I was dealing with Covid-19 on my own.

I was trying to digest the fact that the clinic did not call me directly with my results, but rather chose to inform my next of kin.

On some days I would sing and dance in my room; on other days I would have a headache, feel exhausted and stay in bed the whole day.

And my taste buds were definitely not my buds any more.

## **COMPROMISED ISOLATION**

Since I am the only girl in our household, the boys still expected me to cook, which broke my isolation and increased the risk of me passing the virus on to my family.

Cooking with Covid is no mean feat. I tried tasting the food while I cooked, but ended up seasoning it with way too much salt and spices.

Chicken tasted metallic, and most other foods were just solid matter.

Without a sense of taste, one does not eat for pleasure, but just to fill one's stomach.

Soon enough, some of my family members started experiencing headaches and a loss of taste and smell.

Then my father tested positive. When I felt better, I went back to the Clinic to get retested and get a discharge letter so that I could go back to work.

The clinic referred me to the National Health-Training Centre, where I received my initial official Covid-19 test results and a discharge letter – without being tested again.

The discharge letter stated I could now go back to work as I have completed self-isolation.

## **LESSONS LEARNT**

I never took the wearing of masks seriously, but now I do.

Aside from that, my views on Covid-19 still stand.

I am not afraid of it, but I fear for those who are vulnerable – especially since the Ministry of Health and Social Services does not seem to keep a close eye on self-isolating Covid-19 patients.

Therefore, we need to man up, mask up and take responsibility for our own health and that of those around us.

– *Mercy Karuombe is an intern at The Namibian.*

