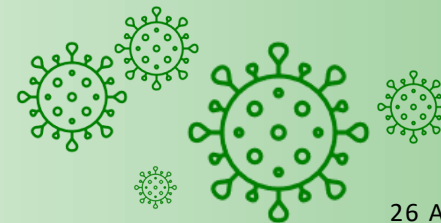




# COVID CORNER

Exploring the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on our lives



26 August 2022

## COVID & traditional medicine

### 26-31 AUGUST IS AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MEDICINE WEEK

#### What is African traditional medicine?

African traditional medicine combines the use of indigenous herbs and other ingredients with African spirituality. It has been used for physical, mental and spiritual healing and wellbeing for centuries.

#### Who uses African traditional medicine?

Around 80% of South Africa's population relies on traditional medicine for their basic health needs. For many it is the only healthcare available, accessible and affordable.

While mainstream medicine largely ignored traditional medicine for some time, the last few decades have seen the importance of African medicinal plants gain prominence, resulting in increasing use around the world.

The African Aloe is perhaps the most widely recognised. Externally, it is used to heal wounds, burns, scrapes and ulcers, as well as treat eczema and fungal infections like ringworm. Internally it is used as a laxative and to treat gastric ulcers.

#### COVID and African traditional medicine

COVID-19 boosted the study of indigenous plants as an untapped pharmaceutical resource. A survey during the South African lockdown found around 46% of respondents were using traditional medicines for the prevention and treatment of COVID-19. Scientists are now studying medicinal plants like Artemisia annua, also known as sweet wormwood, as possible treatments for COVID-19. However, they still need to be tested for efficacy and safety.

#### Medicinal plants can be dangerous when not used properly

The Traditional Health Council of South Africa warns people not to use traditional medicine without consulting a trained practitioner, and not to miss follow-up consultations. Some of the herbs used in traditional medicine are dangerous and, if they are not used properly, could have devastating effects, such as prolonged health problems, or even death.

Improved regulation is needed to increase credibility and improve safety standards.



## Fast Facts

- The use of African traditional medicine is widespread, including for COVID-19
- African medicinal plants are increasingly recognised and used in mainstream medicine
- Medicinal plants can be very dangerous when not prepared correctly or used in the correct doses
- Make sure you consult a trained practitioner, and go to all your follow-up appointment

## Want to find out more?

#### Traditional African medicine:

<https://theconversation.com/traditional-african-medicine-and-conventional-drugs-friends-or-enemies-92695>

#### Herbal medicines:

<https://www.intechopen.com/chapters/64851>

#### Health warning:

<https://health-e.org.za/2021/08/26/limpopo-traditional-healer-dont-skip-consultations/>

## Ask Dr M

### Do you still have questions?

Call us on

**0800 24 36 72**

or WhatsApp

**082 735 4472**



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