

Last reviewed:

16 October 2020



衛生防護中心
Centre for Health Protection

Infection Control Branch

**Health Advice on Prevention of Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) for
Religious Assembly
(Interim)**

I. Disease information

Please visit the following website for disease information, affected areas and updated information related to COVID-19:

<https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/index.html>

2. The Department of Health advises faith-based communities should take the following precautionary measures to minimize the risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19.

II. Preventive measures

A. Maintain Good Personal Hygiene

- (a) Avoid touching eyes, mouth and nose.
- (b) **Maintain hand hygiene**
 - i. Perform hand hygiene frequently, especially before touching mouth, nose or eyes; after using the toilet; after touching public installations such as handrails or door knobs; or when hands are contaminated by respiratory secretion after coughing or sneezing.

- ii. Wash hands with liquid soap and water, and rub for at least 20 seconds, then dry with a disposable paper towel. When the hands are cleaned, do not touch the water tap directly again (for example, using a paper towel to wrap the faucet before turning it off). If hand washing facilities are not available, or when hands are not visibly soiled, hand hygiene with 70-80% alcohol-based handrub is an effective alternative.
- (c) Check body **temperature** regularly. Those with fever, respiratory symptoms or sudden loss of taste/smell should refrain from attending the assembly, wear a surgical mask, avoid going to crowded places, and seek medical advice promptly.
- (d) Cover your mouth and nose with tissue paper when sneezing or coughing. Dispose the soiled tissues into a lidded rubbish bin, then wash hands thoroughly.
- (e) All should wear **mask** as far as feasible. For safety reasons, mask-wearing is not recommended for
 - i. children below age of 2 without supervision
 - ii. people with difficulty breathing
 - iii. people need assistance to remove the mask.
- (f) N95 respirators are generally not recommended for use by the general public in community settings as surgical mask can protect against COVID-19 which is mainly transmitted by droplet and contact route. Special training is required for proper wearing and removal of N95 respirator. Otherwise the infective risk due to inadequate protection and contamination may be increased.
- (g) Staff are advised to stagger their meal time and adopt **social distancing** when having meals. If meal is offered to staff, have pre-packaged boxes or bags for each staff member whenever possible, instead of a buffet or family-style meal. Avoid meal sharing.
- (h) Build up good body immunity by having a balanced diet, regular exercise and adequate rest, do not smoke and avoid alcohol consumption.

B. Worshippers

- (a) Worshippers are encouraged to **bring their own items** (e.g. prayer rugs, prayer books) to attend religious assemblies if needed.
- (b) Worshippers should check their **temperature** before visiting. Those with fever or respiratory symptoms should cancel their visit, wear surgical mask and seek medical attention promptly.
- (c) Worshippers should wear **masks** and perform **hand hygiene** before entering premises; keep vigilant and maintain good personal hygiene, for example, perform hand hygiene again after attending religious assemblies.
- (d) **Avoid physical contact** between worshippers, touching or kissing of sacred and symbolic objects during worship services and prayer.
- (e) Maintain appropriate social distance with other people of **at least 1 metre**.
- (f) Take a shower or bath and wash your hair when you return home, and wash your clothes properly.

C. Premises Setting

- (a) Avoid large group gatherings. Please take note of the Government's announcement on the latest public health control measures in relation to group gathering, and to follow legal requirement in accordance with relevant regulation(s) under the Prevention and Control Disease Ordinance (Cap. 599).
- (b) Conduct rituals and faith-related activities through live-streaming or other online media channels whenever possible.
- (c) If on-line /virtual gatherings are not feasible, keep the duration of the gathering to a minimum and limit the number of worshippers as far as possible to limit contact among participants.
- (d) Arrange **temperature** check at the entrance. Staff should wear a surgical mask and check temperature for worshippers upon entry to the premises and deny entry of those with fever.
- (e) Provide adequate **hand hygiene** facilities, such as 70 to 80% alcohol-based handrub at the entrance and inside the premises. Provide masks to worshippers if needed.
- (f) Regulate the number and flow of worshippers entering, attending and departing from premises to ensure **social distancing of at least 1 metre** if feasible.

- (g) Space out seating for worshippers who do not live in the same household to **at least 1 metre apart** when possible; or set up partition between worshippers, consider limiting seatings to alternate rows.
- (h) **Avoid sharing of items** such as prayer books among worshippers.
- (i) In case singing / saying prayers are essential as part of the faith-related activities, consider having a soloist or limiting the number of members concerned and keep **at least 1 metre** between individuals.
- (j) **Avoid physical contacts** as far as feasible, replace handshakes with a bow or peace sign while performing religious greetings.
- (k) Advise worshippers against dipping their fingers in fountains / containers of holy water. Avoid rituals involving body contact and substitute appropriate practices.
- (l) Consider using electronic payment or fixated collection box for collecting donations instead of using shared collection bags or baskets.
- (m) All instruments for rituals and faith-related activities need to be cleaned and disinfected properly after use.
- (n) Identify a room or area where a person could be isolated if he or she becomes ill or begins to develop symptoms and seek medical consultation immediately. Close off areas used by the sick until cleaning and disinfection done.
- (o) Consider keeping a list of worshippers (if feasible) and staff duty list, which include their personal particulars and contact information to facilitate contact tracing when necessary.
- (p) Post up health education materials on hand hygiene, cough etiquette and COVID-19 in conspicuous sites to alert the staff and worshippers. Relevant health education materials can be downloaded from the CHP website: <https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/resources/464/102466.html>.

D. Food or Drink as Part of Religious Ritual

- (a) Perform **hand hygiene** before and after food or drink related religious rituals.
- (b) Consider using individual pre-packaged boxes/servings of religious or ceremonial foods, rather than shared portions from communal containers.
- (c) Avoid activities that involves placing religious or ceremonial foods into the mouth of worshippers and worshippers drinking from the same cup.
- (d) Avoid face-to-face communication when not putting on a surgical mask.

E. Maintain Environmental Hygiene

- (a) Maintain good ventilation.
 - i. Keep windows open as appropriate and where possible to increase fresh air supply;
 - ii. Use of fans (e.g. wall, circulating or exhaust fan) in indoor spaces should be accompanied by means to increase outdoor air changes (e.g. opening windows or maximizing fresh air intake of air conditioners) at the same time. Minimize air blowing directly from one person (or group of people) to another;
 - iii. Ensure the air-conditioning system is functioning well with sufficient fresh air supply, clean the air filter and ducting regularly.
- (b) Keep environment clean
- (c) Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as furniture, commonly shared items and floor with 1 in 99 diluted household bleach (mixing 1 part of household bleach containing 5.25% sodium hypochlorite with 99 parts of water), leave for 15 – 30 minutes, and then rinse with water and wipe dry. For metallic surface, disinfect with 70% alcohol.
- (d) If places are contaminated by respiratory secretions, vomitus or excreta, use absorbent disposable towels to wipe them away. Then disinfect the surface and neighbouring areas with 1 in 49 diluted household bleach (mixing 1 part of household bleach containing 5.25% sodium hypochlorite with 49 parts of water), leave for 15-30 minutes and then rinse with water and wipe dry. For metallic surface, disinfect with 70% alcohol.
- (e) **Spraying disinfectants is not recommended as this practice could be harmful and would not reduce the risk of viral transmission.**
- (f) Special attention to following areas
 - i. Areas with frequent access by members of the public (e.g. lifts, escalators, lobby entrance, waiting areas, corridors, Geng kiosk, information counter and lounges): Clean and wipe at least twice daily.

- ii. Frequently-touched surfaces (e.g. buttons, handrails, handle, chairs and mailboxes): Clean and wipe at least twice daily and when visibly soiled.
- iii. Garbage room: Properly clean up rubbish and waste stored in the garbage room every day. Clean and wipe related facilities at least twice daily.
- iv. Clean the exhaust fan inside the lift regularly and keep it in good condition.

F. Maintain Toilet Hygiene

- (a) Keep toilets clean and dry.
- (b) Increase frequency of cleaning and disinfection.
- (c) Provide liquid soap and disposable paper towels for hand washing.
- (d) Ensure the flushing system of the toilet, and hands drying machines are in proper function at all times.
- (e) After using the toilet, put the toilet lid down before flushing to avoid spreading germs.
- (f) Ensure the water traps must be filled with water (including U-shaped water trap, bottled trap or anti-syphonage trap) to prevent foul odour and insects in the soil pipe from entering the premises. Pour about half a litre of water into each drain outlet once a week.
- (g) Do not alter the drain and pipes without prior authorization.

https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/make_sure_the_trap_is_not_dry.pdf

III. Cleaning and Disinfection of Environment when a Confirmed Case of COVID-19 is Encountered

A. Cleaning staff should wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including:

- (a) Surgical mask
- (b) Latex gloves
- (c) Disposable gown
- (d) Eye protection (goggles/face shield) and
- (e) Cap (optional)

B. Staff training

- (a) Ensure the frontline cleaning staff received training with environmental disinfection procedures and supervising staff should have read and familiar with the disinfection guidelines.

C. Enhanced Environmental Disinfection:

- (a) Disinfect all potentially contaminated surfaces or items by using 1 in 49 diluted household bleach (mixing 1 part of household bleach containing 5.25% sodium hypochlorite with 49 parts of water).

D. If There is Blood, Secretions, Vomitus or Excreta Spillage, Take Enhanced Measures:

- (a) Cleaning staff should wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) including surgical mask, gloves, disposable gown, eye protection (goggles/face shield) and cap (optional).
- (b) Use forceps to hold the strong absorbent disposable towels to wipe away the blood, secretions, vomitus or excreta during a preliminary clean up.

- (c) Then put the forceps and used absorbent disposable towels in a garbage bag carefully without contaminating oneself/the environment.
- (d) Disinfect with 1 in 4 diluted household bleach (mixing 1 part of household bleach containing 5.25% sodium hypochlorite with 4 parts of water), wipe from the outside inward, leave for 10 minutes, rinse with water and wipe dry afterwards.
- (e) After the procedure, put all the wastes and cleaning tools (e.g. forceps, cloth, mop head) in the garbage bag.
- (f) Carefully remove PPE, put them in the garbage bag, and then perform hand hygiene.

(When hands are not visibly soiled, use 70-80% alcohol-based handrub. Wash hands with soap and water when hands are visibly dirty or visible soiled with blood, body fluid.)
- (g) Wear a pair of new gloves, seal the waste bag tight and dispose it properly in covered rubbish bin. Then, label the rubbish bin and put it in a safe undisturbed place until collection.
- (h) Remove gloves carefully. Wash hands with liquid soap and water.

IV. Guidelines and Educational Material for Reference by Faith-based Communities

A. Proper Use of Bleach

<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/static/100272.html>

B. Proper Use of Mask

<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/healthtopics/content/460/19731.html>

C. Basic Infection Control for Property Management (Video)

<https://www.chp.gov.hk/en/static/101468.html>

D. Health Advice on Prevention of COVID-19 for Properties Management (Interim)

https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/advice_for_properties_management_for_nid_of_public_health_significance_eng.pdf

- E. Health Advice on Prevention of COVID-19 in Workplace (Interim)**
https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/nid_guideline_workplace_eng.pdf
- F. Guidelines on Prevention of COVID-19 for Event Organiser of Mass Assembly**
https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/novel_infectious_agent_event_organiser_of_mass_assembly_en.pdf
- G. Guidelines on Prevention of COVID-19 for Participants of Public Functions**
https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/novel_infectious_agent_of_public_functions_en.pdf
- H. Food Safety and Hygiene Advisory for Food Premises on the Prevention of COVID-19**
https://www.cfs.gov.hk/english/whatsnew/files/Food_Safety_and_Hygiene_Advisory_for_Food_Premises_20200330v4final.pdf.pdf

First edition: 15 May 2020

Last updated: 16 October 2020

Last reviewed: 16 October 2020

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