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MINISTRY OF HEALTH

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எனது இல) DGHS/COVID-19/347/2021
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திகதி) 16 .07.2021
Date)

All Deputy Director Generals
Director, Quarantine
Chief Epidemiologist
Provincial Directors of Health Services
Regional Directors of Health Services
Provincial/District Consultant Community Physicians
Regional Epidemiologists
Medical Officers of Health

Preventive measures at religious places during the pandemic of COVID-19

This guideline is issued to protect clergy, staff, worshippers and others from COVID-19 infection. Infection can spread easily among worshipers at religious places (Temple, Kovil, Church, Mosque or any other place where public worship or religious ceremony are performed) due to public gatherings.

1. Should not have overcrowding outside and inside the religious place, entrance, lobbies, waiting areas, preaching halls, prayer halls etc.
2. Should have floor markings at least one meter apart at the entrance, lobbies, waiting areas, prayer halls etc. to ensure the physical distancing of persons in all directions.
3. Pews / benches should be marked at least one meter apart to ensure the physical distancing of persons. This should be maintained in all directions.
4. Number of persons allowed to enter should be related to the number of persons that can be placed at least one meter apart in preaching hall / prayer hall. Maximum number should **not exceed one hundred (100) persons** (e.g. after placing the markings in the preaching hall / prayer hall at least one meter apart from each other from all sides, if there are 105 markings, only 100 persons should be allowed to enter the hall per session).
5. Worshipers should keep a distance of at least one meter between each other from the time they enter until they leave the religious place.

6. Provide enough space on the sides of the preaching hall / prayer hall of the religious places to allow the worshipers to leave, starting from one end of a row up to the exit, without the need to pass between other worshipers.
7. Ensure good ventilation at the religious places.
8. All persons should wear a clean face mask covering nose and mouth throughout (no removing or improper wearing of face mask). Face mask should be worn securely and properly and should not be touched thereafter without cleaning the hands properly. (Face shield is an optional item to be used with a face mask. Therefore, worshippers only with face shields should not be allowed to enter the religious place).
9. Facilities should be available to wash hands with soap and water at the entrance and inside the religious places.
10. Every person should enter the religious place after cleaning their hands properly.
11. Persons should avoid handshake, hug or any other forms of physical greetings / contact.
12. Should not touch the face (eyes, nose, or mouth) without cleaning the hands.
13. All persons attending the religious place should practice respiratory etiquettes (cover the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, wash the hands or use a hand sanitizer every time you touch your mouth or nose).
14. Sanitize the hands before and after the use of the religious books / booklets or any other publication in religious places.
15. Should not have or distribute any kind of food or drink inside/outside the religious place.
16. Stay at home if having even slightest symptoms of COVID-19 such as fever, cough, runny nose, sore throat, shortness of breath etc.
17. Worshipers or staff should not attend the religious places if under quarantine or an immediate close contact of a positive person.
18. Washrooms should have a proper water supply and soap/ liquid soap should be available to clean hands.
19. Maintain regular housekeeping practices, including routine wiping/cleaning, wet mopping or washing the floors with soap and water or 0.1% sodium hypochlorite solution or a general-purpose detergent and disinfecting of surfaces and equipment (All metal surfaces shall be disinfected with minimum of 70% v/v alcohol solution. All non-metal surfaces be disinfected with 0.1% sodium hypochlorite solution).
20. Should not remain in and around the religious places before or after the preaching / prayer service / mass. It should be strongly advised that religious places should not be made a meeting point for even small groups of people to meet.

21. Worshipers must bring their own preaching / prayer mat to preach / pray if using mats and should not share any personal belonging with others.
22. Should refrain from touching the statues / other objectives.
23. Should not loiter in and around the religious places before or after the preaching / prayers.
24. It is important to provide no-touch waste bins (pedal type) at the religious places.
25. Should not conduct special religious activities such as possessions / festivals/ food distribution (Annathanam), 'Kavadi' etc. until further notice.
26. Staff wearing face masks should be allocated for crowd management and to ensure the adherence to preventive measures of COVID-19 by all the persons attending the religious places.
27. Should not have hand to hand passing of flower trays, water pots etc during Buddha Poojas / Bodhi Poojas or any other activities.
28. During the Holy Communion at the church, the priests should distribute the consecrated host to the communicant's hand instead of keeping it on the tongue. The priest should be wearing a face mask during the Holy Communion. Sharing of wine during communion should not be practiced.
29. Priests should not apply holy ash (vibhuti) or any other material on the forehead / body of worshipers in kovils / devalayas or any other religious place.
30. Should not perform ablution/wudhu (a purification ritual, requiring that the prayers to wash their faces, hands, arms, and feet) at the mosque. Do this at home. If need to perform ablution should be done by getting a water source through a tap and not by the common water tank (Hawl).
31. Area Medical Officer of Health should monitor and supervise the activities through area Public Health Inspector.


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