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Ministry of Health

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Date)

DDG, NHSL,
DDG, NH Kandy,
Directors of All Hospitals,
Provincial and Regional Directors of Health Service,
Heads of Institutions of dedicated COVID-19 treatment facilities,
All other Heads of Institutions

Discharge criteria for COVID-19 patients (Version 3 – 30th October 2020)

At present discharge of COVID-19 patients from hospitals requires a combination of SARS-CoV-2 PCR ± antibody testing. This, however, may lead to practical difficulties in the future if the current trend in COVID-19 caseload continues, overwhelming laboratory and hospital capacities. Furthermore, most individuals, despite being non-infectious, continue to test positive for COVID-19 by PCR and also take longer to develop antibodies, resulting in prolonged hospital stay which can negatively influence the patient as well as the healthcare delivery system.

Therefore, based on growing evidence and global recommendations, **criteria for discharge of COVID-19 confirmed patients** are revised as below:

A. Discharge of asymptomatic individuals – from isolation facility/ Intermediate Care Centres

Both of the following should be present

- i. At least a period of **14 days** has passed from diagnostic PCR test

AND

- ii. Patient has remained asymptomatic throughout the period

B. Discharge of mildly symptomatic patients – from isolation facility/hospital

All of the following should be present

- i. At least a period of **14 days** from onset of illness/point of positive PCR test

AND

- ii. Absence of fever AND respiratory symptoms (cough, sore throat, SOB) for at least **3 days**

In both the above categories, patient can be discharged from isolation facility/ Intermediate Care Centres or hospital without subsequent testing if all of the criteria recommended above are fulfilled.

C. Discharge of patients with moderate^{*}/severe illness[#] – treated at hospitals

With complete resolution of symptoms – the patient can be discharged from hospital if the following are fulfilled:

- i. At least a period of 14 days has passed from onset of symptoms/ diagnostic PCR test
AND
- ii. Absence of fever **AND** respiratory symptoms (cough, sore throat, SOB) for at least **3 days**
- iii. **Two consecutive PCR tests** performed 24 hours apart, the first of which is taken at least 11 days after onset of symptoms, **are negative OR** if the COVID-19 **antibody test (IgG) is positive** using ELISA / immune chemiluminescence tests standardized and locally validated for Sri Lanka (and **not rapid tests**).

Without complete resolution of symptoms – the patient can be discharged from hospital if **ALL** of the following are fulfilled:

- i. At least a period of 14 days has passed from onset of symptoms/ diagnostic PCR test
- ii. Afebrile for 3 days
- iii. Clinical improvement of symptoms (cough, sore throat, SOB) for at least **3 days**
- iv. **Two consecutive PCR tests** performed 24 hours apart, the first of which is taken at least 11 days after onset of symptoms, **are negative OR** if the COVID-19 **antibody test (IgG) is positive** using ELISA / immune chemiluminescence tests standardized and locally validated for Sri Lanka (and **not rapid tests**).

* moderate illness → presence of fever > 38°C, but no evidence of pneumonia/ respiratory distress

#severe illness → persistent fever > 5 days/ evidence of pneumonia/ respiratory distress present

D. Discharge of significantly immunocompromised patients^{*} (treated at hospitals)

*Examples of significantly immunocompromised patients include:

- Organ transplant recipients on immunosuppressive therapy
- Bone marrow transplant recipients (if performed within the past 2 years)
- Cancer patients undergoing treatment (active malignancies)
- Those on long-term immunosuppressants/corticosteroids for any cause
- HIV-infected patients with CD4 T lymphocyte count below 200 cells/mm³
- Patients with primary immune deficiency
- Any other condition as decided by the treating consultant

Such patients can be discharged from hospital if **ALL** of the following are fulfilled:

- i. At least a period of 14 days has passed from onset of symptoms/ diagnostic PCR test
- ii. Afebrile for 3 days
- iii. Clinical improvement of symptoms (cough, sore throat, SOB) for at least **3 days**
- iv. **Two consecutive PCR tests** performed 24 hours apart, the first of which is taken at least 11 days after onset of symptoms, **are negative OR** if the COVID-19 **antibody**


test (IgG) is positive using ELISA / immune chemiluminescence tests standardized and locally validated for Sri Lanka (and not rapid tests).

Flowchart for discharge of COVID-19 patients is given as Annexure.

All COVID-19 positive patients should undergo **strict home quarantine for further 2 weeks** following discharge from isolation facility/hospital. In case of **category A or B** above, if strict home quarantine is not possible, such patients should be kept in isolation facility/hospital for further one 1 week. For them an additional 1 week of self-isolation is required.

All heads of institutions of designated COVID-19 treatment facilities and technical heads of designated laboratories should make necessary arrangements according to this circular.

Please note that this circular may be updated according to the condition of the country and will be informed accordingly.


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Cc:

- Hon. Minister of Health
- Additional Secretaries
- Director General of Health Services
- All DDGs
- Chairman, NMRA
- Chief Epidemiologist
- Director, MRI
- Technical heads of designated laboratories

Annexure -- Discharge pathway for COVID-19 Confirmed patients

