



INSTRUCTIONS FOR SELECTED PUBLIC ACTIVITIES/WORK SETTINGS FOR THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF COVID- 19

The instruction notes are given for a range of public activities and work settings. Some sectors such as tourism, large shopping malls, event management, etc. would require reference to several instruction notes.

The Instructions are subject to overall permission given by the Ministry of Health to resume functions (totally/selected).

Each instruction note is issued by the Director General of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medical Services and are for the establishment/owner/ responsible authority to follow in prevention of transmission of COVID-19.



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முதியு வாழ்க்கை மறையை நோக்கி
TOWARDS A NEW NORMAL



MINISTRY OF HEALTH
AND INDIGENOUS
MEDICAL SERVICES



World Health
Organization



GOVERNMENT MEDICAL
OFFICERS ASSOCIATION



SRI JAYAWARDENEPURA
KOTTE MUNICIPAL
COUNCIL



19. Places of worship

Places of worship include temples, churches, mosques and kovils that are visited by devotees. Although Religious activities are considered mentally soothing, many customs associated with religious activities may be difficult to perform complying with physical distancing, hand hygiene and aseptic techniques that are required. Therefore, all types of religious gatherings are not permitted until further notice

Specific message/ Instruction/s

All religious activities should conform to the general COVID 19 prevention guidelines

Organizer/ owner/employer

- No collective activities and gatherings at places of worship are allowed except for weddings (refer instruction notes on weddings). No special congregational prayers or religious physical gatherings (such as perahara, prayer services, meetings, communal Quran recitations, communal meals, etc) of any kind exceeding 5 individuals are to be held on the premises and even in private premises. Physical distancing of 1m must be ensured even if the number of worshippers does not exceed 5.
- Establish hand washing facilities at the entrance and limit entrance to one gate to facilitate flow of people.
- In restricted areas, all places of worship must remain closed until further notice.
- If any clergy/priest/mowlavi/nuns or any employee is unwell or has any symptoms of COVID 19, he/she should seek health advise, and must not interact with members of the public.
- If necessary, control of the number of devotees entering the premises should be carried out with the help of the local police station
- Regular congregational prayers are not to be carried out until further notice
- All devotees should wear a mask inside the premises
- Priests too should wear a mask during encounters with public
- Encourage devotees to carry out their religious observances at home.
- Where feasible, congregational prayers may be broadcast using online platforms for participation of devotees
- Almsgiving should be offered at the temple by restricted members of the family, and a short prayer may be said with limited participation, maintaining physical distancing. Hand washing facilities should be available at the alms giving area too
- Special religious activities such as chanting of pirith, bana, novenas, poojas to Hindu Gods should be refrained until permitted, as these lead to increased number of people gathering and sharing of food and items. Food should not be shared among devotees in or outside the premises and should refrain from distribution of holy water, sacred/ blessed food, porridge etc. Do not leave holy water/ holy meals outside the premises to be collected by devotees.
- During the Holy Communion at the Church the priests are encouraged to 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 practised
- It should be strongly advised that the temple, church, mosque or the kovil should not be made a meeting point for even small groups of people to meet.
- The meetings of chief priests should be conducted adhering to social distancing precautions
- You are required to fill the provided Assurance form, indicating compliance with the instructions given. The original of the Assurance form should be submitted to the area Medical Officer of Health. A copy of the same should be sent to the local government authority (municipal council/



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urban council/ pradeshiya sabha) and another copy should be kept with you. The chief priest/ incumbent is responsible to ensure that the above guidelines are strictly adhered to.

Public

- Carry out religious observances at home for your own safety
- Congregational prayers can be followed on television or using the internet if available
- Always wash your hands when you enter the almsgiving (dane) areas. Almsgiving should be offered in shortest time at the religious place by restricted number of family members, and a short prayer may be said with limited participation, maintaining physical distancing. If needed two persons can be allowed to offer 'Dane' and depending on the number of priests, for every additional five priests one more person is allowed
- If you are entering a religious place always wear a Mask, maintain a one metre distance with all and do not touch face without washing hands
- If you are taking any offering always take them in your own container and wash them thoroughly with soap and water once you return home.
- At the Holy mass the communicant should receive the consecrated Host to their hands and should step aside and reverently consume the Host immediately. The communicant should refrain from touching any other surfaces during this process.
- Spend the minimum time possible at the religious place. Do not loiter around the premises chatting to people
- Use culturally and religiously sanctioned greetings that avoid physical contact such as placing your own hands together, waving, nodding, or placing hand over heart.
- Pilgrimages and group visits to religious sites is strongly discouraged under the present circumstances. Instead, you are advised to visit your nearest place of worship with only your household members if needed, until further notice.

Method/s of instruction

- Posters at entrance and exit points
- Media communique
- Social media posts
- Letter to all heads of religions in Sri Lanka
- Notification to law enforcement to support places of worship in limiting numbers
- The dayaka sabhawas/ trust boards of each institution should circulate the precautions to the community.
- Announcements can be made locally using Public Address systems

Further comments:

Also refer to the following guidelines issued by the Ministry of Healthcare and Indigenous Medical Services:

- 1) Preventive measures to be taken during Vesak to control COVID 19 outbreak
- 2) Preventive measures to be taken during Ramadan to control COVID 19




Director General of Health Services

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