

GENERAL GUIDANCE FOR THE PUBLIC ON COVID-19 PREVENTION



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TOWARDS A NEW NORMAL



Instructions for selected public activities/work settings for the prevention and control of COVID - 19

A. GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR PUBLIC ACTIVITIES TO ADOPT COVID PREVENTION MEASURES

These general instructions support all other specific instructions given for resumption public activities.

Consider that **D**istancing, **R**espiratory **E**tiquette, **A**septic techniques and wearing of **M**asks would apply to many public activities (DReAM)

Instruction notes are available for selected public activities/work settings. For activities/settings which are not specifically mentioned, the following general instructions should be followed, in addition to any relevant instruction notes.

Distancing

Why is physical distancing important?

COVID-19 virus primarily spreads through droplet and contact transmission.

When people cough, sneeze, or speak they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth. If they are infected, these droplets may contain the COVID-19 virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in these droplets along with the virus if it is present.

- Maintain at least 1-meter (3 feet) distance between yourself and others. This is especially important with unknown persons and those you do not encounter frequently
- Limit gathering in groups – at home, parks, restaurants, shops, etc
- Avoid going to crowded places because it is difficult to maintain physical distance in crowds, and you are more likely to come into close contact with someone who is ill
- Avoid public gatherings
- Form orderly queues instead of crowding around service points, and maintain 1 meter distance between yourself and the people adjacent to you in the queue
- In sitting/waiting areas maintain an empty seat between yourself and the people adjacent to you
- Distancing is easier when it is planned and peaceful.
- Connect virtually with loved ones by phone and video calls, texts or social media instead of in person
- Conduct conferences and large meetings via online platforms; if this is not possible, cancel or postpone them
- Work from home if possible
- Switch to online classes if possible
- Use delivery services for prescriptions and groceries when possible.

Respiratory Etiquette

- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough / sneeze, using the inner side of your elbow or a tissue (and immediately dispose of the tissue into a closed bin)



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- Stay home and self-isolate even with minor symptoms such as cough, sore throat, headache, mild fever, until you recover. If necessary, ask a family or friend to bring you supplies. If you need to interact with others or leave your house, wear a mask to avoid infecting others.
- If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, call 1999 for advice. If directly seeking medical attention, call ahead and make an appointment if possible, informing about your symptoms. If you are going to a hospital OPD, make sure to inform about your symptoms at the entrance/during registration.
- Do not spit in public places

Aseptic techniques

Why is this important?

COVID-19 virus is spread by droplet and contact transmission.

Contact transmission means by touching infected people and/or contaminated objects or surfaces, your hands can spread the virus to you through your mouth, nose or eyes if you touch them.

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (see diagram below). If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.

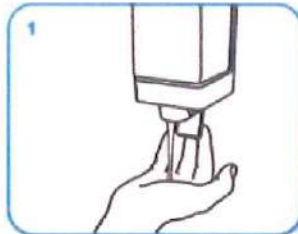
This is important after touching frequently touched surfaces/objects such as door handles/lift buttons/ATM machines, when entering and leaving a public place/building (taps may be available at the entrance), or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.



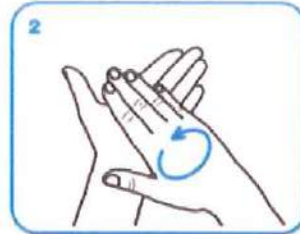
Instructions for selected public activities/work settings for the prevention and control of COVID - 19



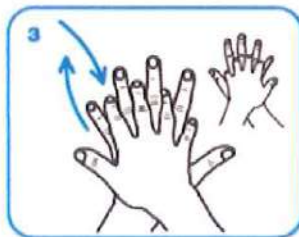
Wet hands with water



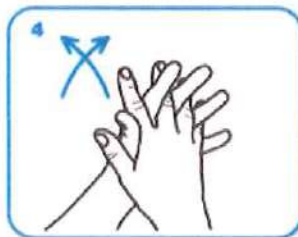
apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces.



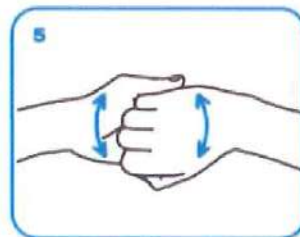
Rub hands palm to palm



right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa



palm to palm with fingers interlaced



backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked



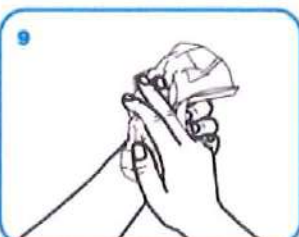
rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa



rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa.



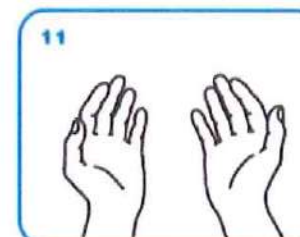
Rinse hands with water



dry thoroughly with a single use towel



use towel to turn off faucet



...and your hands are safe.

How to wash your hands properly (World Health Organization)



Instructions for selected public activities/work settings for the prevention and control of COVID - 19

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid touching frequently handled surfaces/objects where possible (eg-door handles, stair railings, common pens (carry your own pen))
- Avoid touching your personal belongings (eg – mobile phones) in public places, and disinfect these regularly
- Regularly clean/wipe frequently touched surfaces/objects with detergent/disinfectant solution. In public places, the following is recommended:
 - Disinfect metal surfaces with a minimum of 70% v/v alcohol solution
 - Disinfect non-metal surfaces with 0.1% sodium hypochlorite solution(Please refer to the Operational guidelines on preparedness and response for COVID-19 outbreak for work settings by the Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medical Services http://www.health.gov.lk/moh_final/english/public/elfinder/files/feturesArtical/2020/OPERATIONAL%20GUIDELINES%20on%20preparedness%20and%20response%20for%20Covid-19%2017th%20April%202020.pdf and advice from Sri Lanka College of Microbiologists (Annex I)
- Spraying an individual or group with chemical disinfectants or detergents is NOT recommended under any circumstances. This is physically and psychologically harmful to humans and does not limit the spread of COVID-19. It is more important to sanitize hands rather than try to sanitize the whole body in order to prevent transmission of this virus. Please refer to advice from Sri Lanka College of Microbiologists (Annex I)

Masks

General guidance on use of facemasks

- Use of a face mask provides a barrier to droplet infection but does not provide absolute protection against COVID-19 infection. It must be used in combination with the other DReAM measures (physical Distancing, Respiratory Etiquette, Aseptic technique)
- It is important to ensure at least 1 meter physical distancing, even when wearing a face mask
- It is important to wear the right type of mask in the right situation/time and in the right way
- Face masks are useful to limit spread from asymptomatic people (who have COVID-19 but do not show symptoms)

In what situations do you need to use a face mask?

- Face mask should be worn in public settings where is difficult to maintain the recommended physical distancing of at least 1 meter from others, and when encountering strangers/unknown people (eg – public transport, shopping)
- Masks should not be used by young children under the age of 2 years, people who have trouble breathing, in unconscious or incapacitated people or those who are otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance



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- It is not advisable to wear a face mask when exercising (including cycling), playing sports and engaging in heavy manual work
- Those who do not come into contact with patients need not wear medical masks – these should be reserved for healthcare workers. There is no need for the public to wear N95 masks or similar respirators.

Must wear	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- In public settings where minimum 1 meter physical distancing is difficult to maintain- In public places/occasions where you encounter unknown people- When using public transport- People with fever or respiratory symptoms- People caring for those with respiratory illness- High risk groups when leaving home – eg – people over the age of 65 and those living with heart disease, diabetes, obesity, immunity problems or cancer
Need not wear	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- When exercising or playing sports- At home, provided you do not have respiratory symptoms- Children under the age of 2 years should not wear masks- Pre-school children- Children in a classroom while they are in a learning session- A family travelling together in a vehicle where the driver is also a family member- people who have trouble breathing or in unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance and others who may not be able to tolerate masks

How to properly use a face mask

- Whether cloth or disposable mask, one can wear it up to 6-8 hours only
- Wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser before wearing your face mask.
- Make sure the mask covers both your nose, mouth and chin. Do not wear the mask leaving your nostrils out/just below the nostrils, around your neck or on top of your head. Do not take it on or off repeatedly.
- Do not keep adjusting it and lowering the mask to expose mouth when talking.
- If you need to remove the mask temporarily (such as when eating/drinking), fold it in such a way that outside of the mask is folded in and place it in a **clean** pouch/paper bag/envelope. Do not keep masks on the table/ chairs/ in your pockets even temporarily. Keep them in a clean bag until you re-wear it.
- Remove the mask by grasping the loops that are either at the back of your head or behind your ears and pulling forward and away from your face. Do not touch the front of the mask. Dispose the mask after putting inside a suitable bag. Wash your hands with soap and water again.



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- Discard the face mask in a closed bin with a lid if it is disposable. If it is a reusable cloth mask, place it in a dedicated bag/pouch until you can wash it with soap and water.
- Discard the mask if it becomes soiled or moist or if reusable, it must be washed, as the risk of you contaminating yourself increases.
- Keep extra masks with you and keep a separate paper bag/pouch to store the used cloth masks. The paper bag should be discarded after taking the mask for washing. If it is a reusable bag/pouch, this should be washed with soap and water.
- Do not share your mask with others
- Label your cloth masks so that it does not mix with others in your household
- Disposable masks should be used only once as they cannot be properly cleaned for reuse
- Children in school in tuition classes and others in classroom settings should be educated about how to and when to wear and discard or retain the mask in their day to day activities



HOW TO WEAR A NON-MEDICAL FABRIC MASK SAFELY

[who.int/epi-win](https://www.who.int/epi-win)

Do's →



Clean your hands before touching the mask



Inspect the mask for damage or if dirty



Adjust the mask to your face without leaving gaps on the sides



Cover your mouth, nose, and chin



Avoid touching the mask



Clean your hands before removing the mask



Remove the mask by the straps behind the ears or head



Pull the mask away from your face



Store the mask in a clean plastic, resealable bag if it is not dirty or wet and you plan to re-use it



Remove the mask by the straps when taking it out of the bag



Wash the mask in soap or detergent, preferably with hot water, at least once a day



Clean your hands after removing the mask

Don'ts →



Do not use a mask that looks damaged



Do not wear a loose mask



Do not wear the mask under the nose



Do not remove the mask where there are people within 1 metre



Do not use a mask that is difficult to breathe through



Do not wear a dirty or wet mask



Do not share your mask with others

A fabric mask can protect others around you. To protect yourself and prevent the spread of COVID-19, remember to keep at least 1 metre distance from others, clean your hands frequently and thoroughly, and avoid touching your face and mask.



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Reusable cloth face masks

- Reusable cloth face masks can be homemade or bought and should be washed daily with soap/detergent and water.
- Clear markings or design options must be used to distinguish between the outside of the mask and the inside of the mask
- Cloth masks should allow for breathing without restriction and be made of 3 layers of non-allergenic material as per the guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health; Sri Lanka Standards Institute and Consumer Affairs Authority. The mask should fit snugly to the face and be secured with ties or ear loops. The material should easily be washable and dried without damaging the shape with shrinking/being elastic

How to make a reusable cloth face mask

You can make two sizes: Adult or Child.

What you will need

- 100% absorbent material, such as cotton for the innermost layer (layer 1)
- Material for the middle layer (layer 2) – as per the guideline issued by the Ministry of Health; Sri Lanka Standards Institute and Consumer Affairs Authority.
- non-absorbent material, such as polyester or polyester blend for the outermost layer (layer 3). This material can be a customized printed pattern.
- Rope Elastic, beading cord elastic

Instructions:

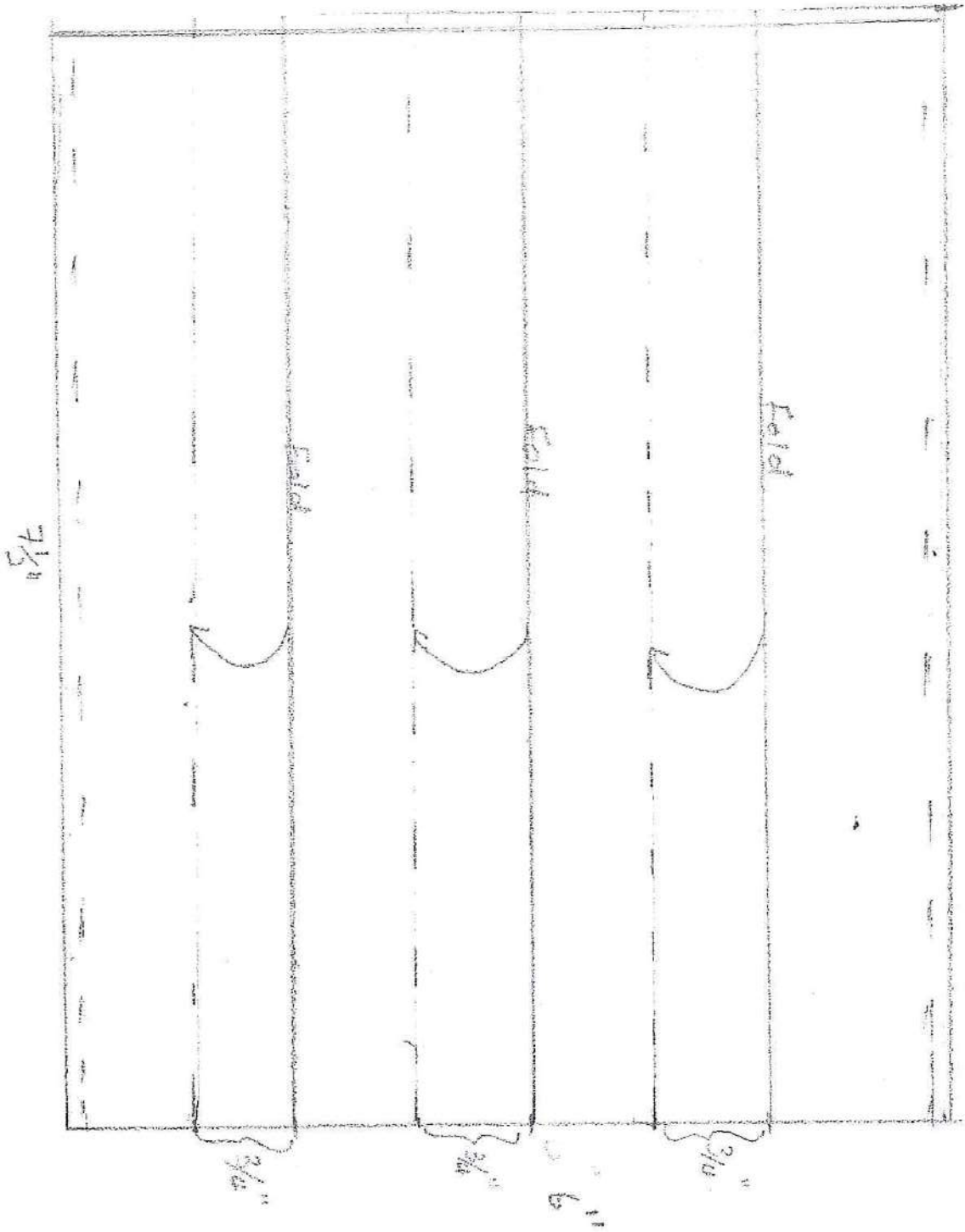
1. Cut each of the fabrics into 7.5" x 6" (Adult) or 6.5" x 5" (Child) rectangles as per the block given. Trace the *fold* lines onto the material using the block.
2. Cut the elastic into two 6" long pieces and tie a knot at each end
3. Place the fabrics one on top of the other in this order
 - i. printed outer nonabsorbent material (layer 3) on top with the printed side facing inside,
 - ii. innermost cotton fabric (layer 1) in the middle
 - iii. middle material (layer 2) at the bottom

These will be turned inside out later.

4. Sew together the three fabrics on the two long edges.
5. Turn the material inside out so that the innermost cotton fabric (layer 1) and the printed outer nonabsorbent material (layer 3) are on the outer sides with the printed side facing outside
6. Sew the elastic loops to the two sides.
7. Fold along the lines indicated in the block (each fold should be 0.75") - there should be three folds. Make sure the folds are the same direction
8. Sew the materials together on the two short sides
9. Sew around the edge of the mask twice.



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B. VERIFICATION OF HEALTH OF EMPLOYEES / CLIENTS HEALTH

- Thermometers may be used to check for fever but are not essential. Use of the thermometer is mainly applicable to larger enterprises and places with higher movement of people (eg supermarkets).
- If temperature is to be checked at the entrance, non-contact infra-red devices are preferred, and staff must be trained on their proper use. The person checking temperature should perform this function avoiding face to face positioning with the client, preferably from a side
- Verbal inquiry and responsible response is the best. Adopt a system of inquiring about the health of employees/clients daily (ask for fever and respiratory symptoms like cough/cold).

C. IMPROVE VENTILATION

- Maintain proper ventilation for adequate circulation of fresh air and maximise sunlight in indoor spaces.
- Improve air flow wherever possible in buildings
- Windows should be kept open for at least 15 minutes when entering the room, especially if it was occupied by others beforehand
- Ensure the normal operation of the AC where relevant. Wash & clean AC filters once a week. Discharge the AC condensate (AC drain water) properly to the drainage system

Simple way of cleaning the filter of your air conditioner:

Step 1: Wear Proper PPE such as face mask, hand gloves etc

Step 2: Switch off your air conditioner using the remote control. Switch off the power supply and pull out the connecting plug

Step 3: Open the front cover. Find the bottom edge of the unit cover and lift up gently to open the unit. Two plastic air filters will be seen sitting on top of the evaporator coil.



Step 4: Gently slide out the air filters. The plastic air filters are held in place with grooved channels on each side. Push upwards and outwards from the bottom to release the filter from the track and gently remove it. Take care not to shake dust/contaminant from the filter all over.

Step 5: Using a gentle spray from your tap with spray nozzle, wash the removed filters. Do not scrub as this will damage the filter. Once the filter is washed with water, the disinfectant may be sprayed using a spray bottle. Allow the filter to dry in the sun or with proper ventilation.



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Step 6: After the filters are dry, they can be reinstalled. Slide the filters back along the channels on the sides to their original location, up and behind the latch to secure them. Close the cover. The AC unit may now be switched on.

COMPLIANCE

The compliance of these instructions are to be followed up by MOH, PHI at the local level. The objective is to maintain no community transmission of COVID-19 and is done in no way to harass or cause inconvenience to public

Director General of Health Services

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Instructions for selected public activities/work settings for the prevention and control of COVID - 19
ANNEXES

Annex I: Recommendations of the Sri Lanka College of Microbiologists:

Decontamination chambers

“We strongly advise that spraying of individuals or groups is NOT recommended under any circumstances. Spraying an individual or group with chemical disinfectants or detergents is physically and psychologically harmful and does not limit the spread of COVID-19. Even if a person is infected with the COVID-19 virus, spraying the external part of the body does not kill the virus inside the body and may worsen the clinical condition of the individual.”

For alcohol or other disinfectants to be effective, they need to be present in adequate amount for a given period of time (contact time). The nature of chambers does not sufficiently provide this. According to U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for ozone to be effective in destroying harmful bacteria, it must be present at a concentration above levels considered safe for humans.

The main mode of transmission of COVID-19 is by contaminated hands touching the face (eyes, nose, mouth). Therefore, what needs to be done is to sanitize hands rather than try to sanitize the whole body in order to prevent transmission of this virus. Action of alcohol and other chemical disinfectants in these Decontamination Chambers is unlikely to achieve this function. Further, there is a significant fire hazard and there is wastage of alcohol and other disinfectants in large quantities when used inside these Decontamination Chambers, when they can be put to much better use in preparing hand sanitizers and for environmental disinfection in healthcare and other high risk environments.

In addition, these chemical disinfectants can have various adverse effects on humans. In particular, spraying of chlorine on individuals can lead to irritation of eyes and skin, bronchospasm due to inhalation, and potential gastrointestinal effects such as nausea and vomiting. Inhaled ozone can damage the lungs, may worsen chronic respiratory diseases like asthma and compromise the ability of the body to fight respiratory infections. Excessive exposure to UV light may put a user at risk of eye injury, skin burns or even an increased risk of skin cancer. To date, the FDA has not authorized any products using ozone gas or ultraviolet (UV) light even to clean, disinfect or sanitize inanimate objects.”

Practice of spraying disinfectants to large outdoor areas such as streets and public areas. SLCM is in the view that the disinfectants should be only sprayed/applied on high/ frequently touched surfaces by public such as hand railings, doorknobs, poles on transit vehicles, elevator buttons, park/ street benches etc. It has been proven that the virus can survive from hours to days in these contaminated surfaces.

However, spraying of disinfectants in large quantities into environment can cause environmental pollution, wastage of chemicals, harmful effects on humans as described above and harmful effects on animals/fish.



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Further, the action of these disinfectants on these outdoor surfaces is not yet evaluated since the disinfectants may disintegrate/ degrade by exposure to different environmental conditions such as sunlight.

Therefore, rather than spraying large quantities of disinfectants to the environment, we suggest to wipe the high touched surfaces with disinfectant solutions.