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Guidelines

Guidelines for Christmas Event for Prevention of Corona Virus

Objective

To provide health guidelines for mitigation of spread of person-to-person transmission of COVID-19 during occasion of Christmas

Rationale

In the context of COVID-19, Christmas events that could amplify the transmission of the virus and potentially disrupt the country's response capacity. COVID-19 is transmitted from person to person through respiratory droplets and contact with contaminated surfaces, and the risk of transmission appears to be proportional to the closeness (1 meter) and frequency of the interaction between an infected individual and an unaffected individual.

With the COVID-19 pandemic in a full rage, the safest thing that can be done during this Christmas holiday is to stay home. There should be limited in-person contacts during holiday preparations and celebrations. In such events, prevention of importation of the virus from on household to other and other places like shopping malls, churches are an essential element in avoiding or minimizing the occurrence of infection and of serious outbreaks in these settings and beyond. Precautions are required by public especially Christian community to protect themselves and prevent transmission.

General Preventive Measures

- Public should only undertake minimal necessary travel during these Christmas holidays as Pakistan has already been struck by second wave.
- Social visits during Christmas and general family get togethers should be avoided.
- Christmas shopping should only be restricted to minimal essentials and crowding in markets is not advisable.
- The traditional gift exchange is likely to increase transmission, so it should be avoided for this Christmas.



- Large scale home gatherings should be avoided amid Covid-19 second wave
- Encourage for outdoor Christmas celebration preferably day time event, strictly observing SOPs with assigned seating arrangements of 1-meter distance
- Every person should wear face/surgical mask
- For indoor gatherings, opening windows and doors can ensure proper ventilation and help lower the risk. Indoor gatherings should be avoided as poor ventilation pose the greatest risk.
- Longer gatherings pose a greater risk than shorter gatherings. Events must be kept shorter.
- Guest list should be kept smaller and ensure there is enough room to enable guests from different households to stay at least 1 meter apart.
- Disinfect the venue place after the celebration ends

Celebrations in Community

- Display posters promoting hand-washing and maintaining good respiratory hygiene (cough etiquette advice) in community where celebration is done
- Ensure screening of all visitors by measuring body temperature at entry points of event (in general public) by dedicated person(s)
- Availability of surgical/medical masks to offer anyone who develops respiratory symptoms
- Christmas trees must be regularly disinfected decorated in public places
- Avoid touching Christmas trees as it may serve as transmission object
- There should be feet icon/ floor sign at least 1-meter distance
- Visitors should practice alternate greetings such as waving or bowing
- Display dispensers of alcohol-based hand sanitizers prominently around the venue

Christmas Prayers in Church

- Thermal Screening for all worshippers entering the church at the entry gates should be arranged
- Provision of hand sanitizer at gate of church
- Preachers/Father should also deliver the sermons on the topic of the virus and preventative measures that Government of Pakistan has taken in order to slow the spread to give individuals an active role in promoting the health and safety of the members of society
- Windows and doors of the church should be kept opened for good ventilation on Christmas day
- No carpets or mats to be laid down in church because the virus is airborne
- Sitting benches for prayers must be ensured by washing them with chlorinated water regularly and each person should sit at least 1 meter apart from other person during prayers
- Every person should wear face/surgical mask
- People must avoid handshake and exchange of flowers



- Worshipers must maintain social distancing by keeping one-meter distance between each other, and every other sitting row should be left empty
- Water coolers should not to be used
- Restrooms and ablution sections must be closed
- Avoid crowding when entering or exiting the church
- Discourage the sick & elderly and children under 15 years of age from church prayers
- Discourage the socializing within the church after event

Note: The above recommendations are being regularly reviewed by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination and will be updated based on the international recommendations and best practices.

The Ministry acknowledges the contribution of Dr Saira Kanwal and HSA/ HPSIU/ NIH team to compile these guidelines.

References

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3. <https://www.novanthealth.org/healthy-headlines/your-fall-and-holiday-covid-19-safety-guide>
4. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/covid-19-holiday-safety-tips/art-20503363>

For more information, please contact:

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<http://covid.gov.pk/>

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