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Guidelines

Guidelines for Easter Celebrations during COVID-19 Pandemic

Objective

To provide guidelines for mitigation of person-to-person transmission of SARS-CoV2 during Easter celebrations, 2021

Rationale

Easter, principal festival of the Christian church, celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day after his Crucifixion.

In the context of 3rd wave of COVID-19 in Pakistan, large gatherings on Easter can amplify transmission of the virus and potentially disrupt and overwhelm the country's response capacity.

With rapidly rising number of cases, Easter celebrations need to be redesigned to ensure safety and protection of all. There should be limited in-person interaction during Easter celebrations, which should be in accordance with the laid-down guidelines. Large family get-togethers are well-known to spread disease and may prove fatal for many. Implementation of SOPs is the most important and reliable way to protect human life.

General Preventive Measures

- Public should only undertake minimal necessary travel during Easter celebrations as Pakistan has already been seriously affected by the third wave of COVID-19.
- Social visits during Easter holidays and general family get togethers should be avoided.
- Easter shopping should only be restricted to minimal essentials and crowding in markets must be avoided.
- The traditional gift exchange may potentially increase transmission and should be avoided during the current pandemic.
- Large scale in-door home gatherings should be avoided amid COVID -19 third wave.



- Outdoor Easter lunch celebration may be arranged, strictly observing SOPs with assigned seating arrangements of 1-meter distance. SARS CoV2 is known to spread during such gatherings.
- Every person should wear face/surgical mask at all times
- For indoor gatherings, opening windows and doors can ensure proper ventilation and help lower the risk. Indoor gatherings should be avoided as poor ventilation poses the greatest risk of acquiring infection which may be life-threatening.
- 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 after the celebration ends. Wiping surfaces with household bleach or detergent should be sufficient. Fumigation is not recommended
- Tradition of decorating tables with spring flowers should be avoided to minimize COVID -19 transmission. It may be kept to a minimum and restricted to areas which cannot be touched.

For Easter Service, Churches should ensure

- Thermal Screening for all people entering the church at the entry gates should be arranged
- Provision of hand sanitizer at gate of church
- Preachers/Fathers should include in their sermon, the current state of COVID-19 and preventative measures that Government of Pakistan has taken in order to slow the spread. They should remind the community of their role in preventing disease spread and promoting health and safety of the members of society
- Traditional ringing of church bells during Easter celebrations should be avoided or single person should be dedicated for ringing church bell
- Church bells should be disinfected regularly
- Windows and doors of the church should be kept opened for good ventilation on Easter
- No carpets or mats to be laid down in church
- Benches for prayers must be disinfected after each Service by washing them with chlorinated water or wiping them with bleach.
- Attendees should sit at least 1 meter apart during prayers and alternate rows may be kept vacant
- Every person should wear face/surgical mask
- People must not shake hands or exchange flowers
- Water coolers should not to be used
- Restrooms and ablution sections must be closed
- Avoid crowding when entering and exiting the church
- Discourage the sick & elderly and children under 15 years of age from physically attending church prayers
- Strictly discourage socializing within the church after the 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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For more information, please contact:

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