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Guidelines for safe Christmas Celebrations during Covid-19 Pandemic

Objective

To provide guidelines for mitigation of spread of person-to-person transmission of COVID-19 on the occasion of Christmas

Rationale

In the wake of ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and emergence and spread of new Variant of Concern Omicron, Christmas events could amplify the transmission of the virus and potentially disrupt the country's response capacity.

General Preventive Measures

- It is mandatory for participants of all Christmas-related gatherings (large and small) to be fully vaccinated.
- Those who received their vaccines 6 months ago and are immunosuppressed (of all ages above 12 years) and those 50 years of age and above, must get their booster dose before attending Christmas congregations.
- Christmas shopping should only be restricted to minimal essentials and crowding in markets is not advisable.
- Encourage outdoor Christmas celebrations, preferably day time events, strictly observing SOPs with assigned seating arrangements of 1-meter distance
- In congregations and gathering, face/surgical mask should be worn appropriately to cover nose and mouth
- 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 risk of transmission.
- 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 congregation venue using household bleach

Celebrations in Community

- Display posters promoting hand-washing and maintaining good respiratory hygiene (cough etiquette)
- Ensure availability of surgical/face masks at the venues
- Avoid touching Christmas trees and other objects of decoration
- Display dispensers of alcohol-based hand sanitizers prominently around the venue

Christmas Prayers in Church

- Provision of hand sanitizer at gate of church
- Sermons to include emphasis on preventative measures and necessity of COVID Vaccination and boosters.
- Windows and doors of the church should be kept opened for good ventilation on Christmas day
- Benches for prayers may be wiped with chlorinated water/household bleach and seating should be 1 meter apart
- Every person should wear face/surgical mask appropriately to cover nose and mouth
- Avoid handshake and exchange of flowers
- Avoid crowding when entering or exiting the church
- Discourage the sick & elderly and children under 15 years of age from attending church prayers,
- Discourage 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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2. theguardian.com/world/2020/nov/25/smarter-ways-tips-navigate-christmas-coronavirus-uk
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/>

<http://nhsrc.gov.pk/> <https://www.facebook.com/NHSRCOfficial>
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