

Chancery of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore

#07-01 Catholic Centre
55 Waterloo Street
Singapore 187954
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29 January 2020

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CHANCERY NOTICE

GUIDELINES FOR CATHOLIC CHURCH IN TACKLING THE WUHAN VIRUS OUTBREAK

by the Catholic Medical Guild of Singapore

INTRODUCTION

As of 28 January 2020, we are in DORSCON yellow.

GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE 2019-NOVEL CORONAVIRUS

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are known to cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases, such as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The 2019-novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) has been identified to be the cause of severe pneumonia in China. The majority of cases have occurred in China, but cases have been exported to other countries and cities, including Singapore.¹

RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES FOR INFECTION CONTROL IN ARCHDIOCESE

Guided by MOH guidelines, the following are the recommendations for infection control in the Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore as of 28 January 2020:

1. General health advisory (see Appendix 1)
2. Guidelines for persons arriving or returning from China (see Appendix 2)
3. Guidelines for specific situations (see Appendix 3)

¹ Ministry of Health. Health Advisory for Persons Placed On Leave Of Absence (LOA). 27 Jan 2020.

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Appendix 1

General Health Advisory²

Travellers and members of the public should adopt the following precautions at all times:

1. Avoid contact with live animals including poultry and birds, and consumption of raw and undercooked meats;
2. Avoid close contact with people who are unwell or showing symptoms of illness;
3. Observe good personal hygiene;
4. Practise frequent hand washing with soap (e.g. before handling food or eating, after going to toilet, or when hands are soiled by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing);
5. Wear a mask if you have respiratory symptoms such as a cough or runny nose;
6. Cover your mouth with a tissue paper when coughing or sneezing, and dispose the soiled tissue paper in the rubbish bin immediately; and
7. Seek medical attention promptly if you are feeling unwell.

For more information, please refer to: <https://www.moh.gov.sg/2019-ncov-wuhan>.

² Ministry of Health, Singapore. Update on Wuhan coronavirus infection in Singapore. 26 January 2020. <https://www.moh.gov.sg/news-highlights/details/update-onwuhan-coronavirus-infection-in-singapore>.

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Appendix 2

Guidelines for Persons Arriving or Returning from China³

1. The Ministry of Health (MOH) has provided advisories for various sectors to implement leave of absences for employees, clients and students who have recently returned from mainland China. While not everyone who has travelled to China and other affected areas will be infected, the institution of a leave of absence will allow government agencies, institutions and employers to mitigate potential risks posed by travel in light of the rapidly evolving situation.

2. All priests, staff and catechism students returning from mainland China are to go on 14 days' leave of absence (LOA), starting from the day after arrival in Singapore.

For all others, please defer official travel to mainland China with immediate effect. All are strongly encouraged to defer any personal trips to mainland China as well.

3. Persons who have been put on a leave of absence should stay at home and minimise close contact with others. They should monitor their health closely and seek medical attention if they develop any fever or symptoms of acute respiratory illness such as cough or shortness of breath.

WHAT MUST BE DONE DURING YOUR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

4. You should remain contactable at all times.

5. Remain in your place of residence as much as possible during your leave of absence.

6. Minimise visitors to your residence. You should maintain a record of persons you come into close contact with during your leave of absence.

³ Ministry of Health, Singapore. Health Advisory for Persons Placed On Leave Of Absence (LOA). 27 January 2020.

<https://www.moh.gov.sg/docs/librariesprovider5/default-document-library/mohhealth-advisory-for-persons-placed-on-leave-of-absence---27-jan-20208e77497be7e64648824b108a5a797c3a.pdf>.

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7. You may leave your place of residence to purchase daily necessities or to attend to important personal matters. However, you should minimise your time spent in public spaces and contact with other individuals, and return to your place of residence as quickly as possible.

If necessary, you may opt for home delivery services or enlist the assistance of others for your daily necessities.

8. You should avoid going to crowded places and attending social gatherings during your leave of absence.

CHECK FOR SYMPTOMS

9. Monitor yourself for fever (e.g. fever $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$) and respiratory symptoms such as cough and breathlessness.

10. If you develop fever, cough or breathlessness, or are feeling unwell, you should seek medical attention immediately at any outpatient clinic.

Please inform the staff and doctor of your travel history. Wear a surgical mask (Annex A) before leaving your residence and avoid taking public transport.

11. In emergency situations (e.g. difficulty in breathing), you should call 995 for an ambulance to take you to hospital. Please inform the 995 operator of your travel history to mainland China.

12. You should update your employer or institution point-of-contact if you are unwell and that you are seeking medical attention.

OBSERVE GOOD PERSONAL HYGIENE

13. Maintain good personal hygiene, including hand washing with soap and water or use of alcohol-based hand rub.

14. Cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing.

15. Maintain good indoor ventilation.

16. Avoid sharing food, crockery, utensils and other personal hygiene items.

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Guidelines for Specific Situations in the Archdiocese

FOR THE GENERAL CONGREGATION

1. Be socially responsible, stay at home if you are sick.
2. Maintain good personal hygiene.
3. Look out for health advisories.
4. Alcohol hand rubs are to be made available near entrances of churches and confessionals.
5. Holy Communion is to be received by hand only till further notice. Holy Communion by Chalice is to be suspended till further notice.
6. No holy water in fonts at entrance of churches as this could be a vehicle for infection.
7. Comply with health advisories and control measures issued by the authorities.

FOR FRONT LINE WORKERS SUCH AS RECEPTIONISTS AND OFFICE MANAGERS

1. General measures in appendices 1 and 2 apply.
2. Practise good hand hygiene – wash hands with soap and water frequently, or use alcohol hand rubs.
3. Have alcohol hand rubs available at counters for visitors to use.

FOR OUR EMPLOYEES

1. General measures in appendices 1 and 2 apply.

FOR MINISTRY MEMBERS

1. General measures in appendices 1 and 2 apply, especially when gathering for meetings and prayer sessions.

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FOR THOSE ATTENDING CHURCH EVENTS, SEMINARS AND PROGRAMMES

1. General measures in appendices 1 and 2 apply.
2. For less essential programmes and talks, churches and organisations should consider postponing these till further notice. Consider alternative online options.

FOR PRIESTS VISITING PATIENTS IN HOSPITALS

1. General measures in appendices 1 and 2 apply.
2. Wear a surgical mask.
3. Practise good hand hygiene. Wash hands with soap and water, or use alcohol hand rubs, BEFORE and AFTER visiting patient(s)
4. Holy Communion by hand only, unless patient is unable to receive by hand, in which case priest should use gloves, or wash hands immediately after with soap and water.
5. Priests who are feeling unwell are NOT to visit patients.

FOR COMMUNION MINISTERS AND PRIESTS VISITING THE SICK AT HOME

1. General measures in appendices 1 and 2 apply.
2. Practise good hand hygiene. Wash hands with soap and water, or use alcohol hand rubs, BEFORE and AFTER visiting patient(s)
3. Holy Communion to be distributed by hand only, unless patient is unable to receive by hand, in which case the priest or Communion Minister should use gloves, or wash hands immediately after with soap and water.
4. Priests and Communion Ministers who are feeling unwell are NOT to visit patients nor distribute Communion.
5. There is no need to wear a mask presently as there is no evidence of community spread at the moment.

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CATECHISM CLASSES

1. Catechism classes should follow the guidelines from The Ministry of Education (MOE).⁴
2. General measures in appendices 1 and 2 apply.
3. Catechists and students should have their temperature taken before classes commence.
4. Catechists are to look out for children/teens who have fever or have respiratory symptoms e.g. cough, running nose. Put a surgical mask on such children/teens, sit them separately and call parents to bring them to see a doctor

⁴ Ministry of Education, Singapore. Stepping Up Precautionary Measures Against the Wuhan Coronavirus Infection: Leave of Absence for Students and Staff Returning from Mainland China. 27 January 2020. <https://www.moe.gov.sg/news/pressreleases>