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COVID-19 Patient Advisory Booklet



Advisory from SingHealth Duke-NUS Transplant Centre

Dear Patient and Next of Kin,

The SingHealth Duke-NUS Transplant Centre cares for its patients and recognises that there may be anxiety and questions pertaining to the current COVID-19 situation and how it affects transplant recipients in Singapore.

This letter will provide you with important information on the following:



**Transplant
patient's risk**



**Precautionary
measures**



**Hygiene
practices**



**If you have
hospital
appointments**



**Waiting for
transplant**

For the latest updates and news, go to <https://www.moh.gov.sg/covid-19>. If you require more information, speak to your transplant coordinator or doctor.

We would like to advise you that there may be misleading and false news circulating through social media and messaging platforms which should be clarified with official sources like MOH's website or your transplant coordinator or doctor.

It is everyone's responsibility in Singapore to do their part in the fight against COVID-19. During this difficult period for Singapore, we urge you and your families to follow the advisory to stay safe and healthy. Should you have concerns not addressed here, please do not hesitate to contact your transplant coordinator.

We wish you good health and stay safe always!

Yours sincerely,

Assoc Prof Prema Raj

Head of SingHealth Duke-NUS Transplant Centre

On behalf of all the transplant programmes in SingHealth

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 stands for Coronavirus Disease 2019 which is caused by SARS-CoV-2 (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2). SARS-CoV-2 belongs to a family of viruses called the Coronaviruses which are a common cause of respiratory tract infections that produce symptoms such as a runny nose, sore throat, cough and fever. However, there are some coronaviruses like SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome) and MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome) which can cause severe infections like pneumonia (infection of the lungs).

However, unlike most other coronaviruses that we get infected with periodically such as the common cold, the SARS-CoV-2 is a new virus that was first detected in infected patients from Wuhan, China but has now spread to other parts of the world. When new viruses like SARS-CoV-2 appear, it can cause severe diseases like COVID-19 because people lack immunity to the virus. Thus, there is a race to find a vaccine so that people can get vaccinated and be protected against the virus.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?



Fever



Cough



**Shortness
of breath**



**Sore
throat**



Body ache

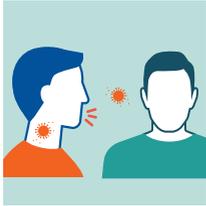
Patients with COVID-19 may experience fever, tiredness, body aches, cough and shortness of breath. Other less common symptoms include a sore throat and runny nose. From current knowledge, the duration from exposure to the virus to onset of symptoms is up to 14 days. Hence, persons at risk are required to stay at home for 14 days. In the most severe form of disease, patients develop a life-threatening pneumonia which may require admission to an intensive care unit to receive more aggressive treatment.

Recovery time appears to take approximately 2 weeks for mild infections and 3 to 6 weeks for severe disease but this will vary depending on the patient's condition.

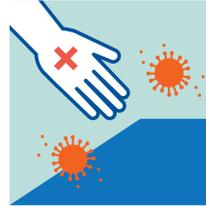
Do take note that not everyone with these symptoms have contracted COVID-19. Many other viruses and bacteria infections can cause similar symptoms.

How does COVID-19 spread?

Currently, evidence suggests that COVID-19 is spread mostly via droplets and contact.



The virus is carried within droplets coming out from an infected person through coughing or sneezing. These droplets can come into contact with the eyes, nose or mouth of another person nearby and, as a result, infect that person.



It is possible to catch the virus from an infected surface (e.g. door handle, tabletop) if a person touches their nose or mouth without washing their hands. Thence, it is important to avoid touching your face until you wash your hands.



Spread of the infection from an infected person to a non-infected occurs most likely when the infected person is having symptoms of COVID-19. Due to this, authorities are advising those who are sick to wear a mask, see a doctor and remain at home if instructed to do so.

Are transplant recipients at a higher risk for the virus?



We do not have specific information on whether COVID-19 infection will be more severe in transplant recipients compared to healthy people. However, we do know that patients who are elderly or have pre-existing medical conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic lung disease, high blood pressure and cancer appear to develop a more severe infection due to a weakened immune system. As a result, transplant recipients may also be more vulnerable and, therefore, it would be important to take precautions advised in this letter to prevent infection.

With ongoing community transmission of COVID-19, it is more important that you stay home as much as possible, avoid social gatherings and put a safe distance between you and other people if you must be out. We encourage transplant recipients to stay up to date with what is happening in the community and follow current up-to-date public health recommendations.

Should I wear a mask when I go out?

You should wear a mask especially if you are unwell with respiratory symptoms such as coughing or sneezing so that any droplets would be trapped by the mask and not spread to other people nearby.

If you are well without respiratory symptoms, the universal use of face masks serves 2 purposes. It may offer you some protection. It also helps protect others from you, in case you are infected but unaware. Regardless, you still need to practice good hand hygiene, and avoid touching your nose and mouth.

HOW TO WEAR A MASK?



It should **COVER YOUR MOUTH, NOSE AND CHIN**, with the coloured side facing outwards.



PINCH THE METAL EDGE OF THE MASK so that it presses gently on your nose bridge.



Remove a used mask by **HOLDING ONLY THE EAR LOOPS**.

Where supplies permit, the use of surgical face masks is preferable. Please ensure it is worn properly. To dispose the mask, remove it carefully – do not touch the outer surface, throw it in a bin and clean your hands well after. If you are using a reusable face mask, please ensure that it is washed regularly and good personal hygiene is practised.

Precautionary Measures

Practise good personal hygiene as below



Wash hands for at least 20 seconds especially if you cough or sneeze or touch surfaces that are shared by other – If you do not have a hand sanitizer or cannot use one because of allergies, washing with soap and water is sufficient.



Do not touch your mouth, nose and eyes until you have cleaned your hands with a hand sanitizer or soap and water.



Ensure you have at least 2 weeks of prescribed medicine remaining at all times in case you receive a Stay-At-Home notice or quarantine order.



Carry a packet of tissue with you wherever you go, in case you need to cough or sneeze.



Avoid contact with individuals who are diagnosed with COVID-19 or suspected of having COVID-19 - If you are aware of any individual who is diagnosed with or suspected of having COVID-19, avoid all further contact and monitor for symptoms of COVID-19. If you develop symptoms, please seek medical attention immediately.



Do not travel to other countries - COVID-19 has been declared a pandemic which means it is found in most parts of the world. Many cases reported in Singapore are Singaporeans who have travelled abroad so it would be wise not to travel. If you need a memo from your doctor to state that you should not travel, your transplant coordinator will assist to arrange this. If you have exceptional reasons to travel, please discuss with your doctor and take into consideration that access to medical care may be limited in many countries due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the country that you visit may suddenly be locked down and you may run out of medications especially anti-rejection drugs.



Avoid contact with individuals who are currently on MC / with history and exposure of overseas travel / on Stay-At-Home notice or quarantined - Many countries globally are increasingly reporting new cases of COVID-19. It is best to avoid contact with individuals who have travelled overseas for 14 days. Contact can resume after 14 days if the individuals are well. If avoiding contact is not possible, it is recommended for all individuals in the house or workplace to limit contact with one another and wash hands as frequently as possible.



Avoid crowds - Cases of COVID-19 in Singapore have arisen due to interactions at social gatherings, workplace meetings and places of worship. We advise you to avoid crowded places or events where large numbers of people would be present (e.g. concert, weddings, etc). You should also avoid rush hour crowds during commutes and keep in touch with relatives and friends through calls, emails and social media rather than meeting each other.



Practise social distancing – This reduces the risk of further local transmission of COVID-19, especially for vulnerable segments of the population. This means reducing the frequency of gatherings, and minimising physical contact with one another. Do clean up after yourself at hawker centres and avoid sharing utensils and dishes.



It is important to stay mentally and physically fit during these times. Exercise is permitted around neighbouring parks while always practising social distancing. You can go out to exercise but maintain 2 metres apart from others and avoid crowded fitness places such as the gym.

What is the proper way to wash my hands?

Please see Annex 1 on the 7-step hand washing techniques for your reference.



Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold) and apply soap



Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap



Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Scrub back of hands, palms, between fingers and under the nails



Rinse your hands thoroughly under clean, running water



Protect your hands with a paper towel when you turn off the tap



Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them

What should I do if I am sick (fever and cough)?



Wear a mask to avoid spreading the infection to others.



If possible, avoid public transport.



Use a disinfectant to clean objects that you come into contact with.



Continue to take your prescribed medications unless advised otherwise.



Don't doctor-hop

See a doctor and avoid visiting more than one clinic.



Cover your mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Dispose used tissue into a lined trash bin.



Stay at home if you are sick and have a MC.



If you remain unwell or feel that your condition has worsened, go to the same doctor who prescribed the MC or go to the Accident and Emergency Department of a hospital.

Precautionary measures when residing with someone who is currently on MC / with history and exposure of overseas travel / on Stay-At-Home notice or quarantined



Avoid contact with others in the household. If that is not possible, keep a physical distance of at least 2 metres apart at all times from one another in the household.



Ensure you have enough medications at home while on MC or quarantined. If you do not have enough, do speak to your transplant coordinator on how to get additional supply of medications.



Avoid sharing food or utensils. Food should be served in separate plates with individual utensils — he/she should not be eating with others and outside of his/her room.



Use a separate room and bathroom if possible. Cordon off your living area so that others in the household will not accidentally cross. Arrange for a toilet/bathroom dedicated to his/her use. When using shared spaces, the person(s) must clean surfaces and objects touched before and after use.



Close the lid of the toilet bowl when flushing. Do not share towels, toothpaste, toothbrush or soap.



Monitor and record your temperature twice daily.



Keep your house well ventilated by opening the windows and balcony doors.



All “high-touch” areas at home such as tables, door handles, taps and sinks must be cleaned frequently. This includes your phones, remote controls and computer keyboards.



All members of the household should wash their hands frequently.



See a doctor if your illness persists or if you fall ill — for those who are on Stay-At-Home notice due to travel or exposure history, they should go to the nearest public hospital emergency department if they develop symptoms (e.g. fever, cough).

Is it safe to visit the hospital for appointments?



You should adhere to any scheduled appointments as there is a need for you to be reviewed by a doctor. When you arrive for your hospital appointment, you will be required to submit a self-declaration form and be screened for fever by a thermal scanner before entering the hospital.



You should put on a mask when visiting the hospital or clinics.

I am awaiting a transplant. Can I get COVID-19 from my donor?

The risks of acquiring COVID-19 from organ transplantation is low and strict precautions are being taken by the transplant team to screen donors carefully for COVID-19 through exposure history, swabs and chest imaging. Your transplant team can advise you further on this.

If you are a living bone marrow, kidney or liver donor, you should avoid travel for 28 days before donating and take the same precautionary measures described above. You will also be screened for COVID-19 before donation can proceed. Your transplant team will advise you further on this.

With the COVID-19 situation changing rapidly, transplantation may be postponed to safeguard the health of donors and recipients as well as ensure that there is adequate healthcare services to care for those who are critically ill or infected with COVID-19.

Can I get COVID-2019 from animals?

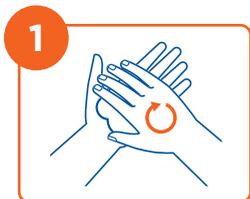


Currently, there is no evidence of animal to human transmission in Singapore. There is no known risk of people being infected by COVID-19 through their pets or animals in Singapore. However, we do advise you to avoid contact with live animals, poultry and birds if you are in a foreign country.

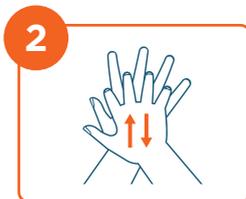
Acknowledgements

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Effective Hand Washing



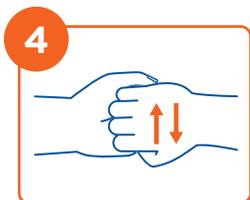
- Wet hands with water and apply soap onto palm.
- Rub palm to palm.



- Place right palm over left dorsum (top of the hand) and vice versa.



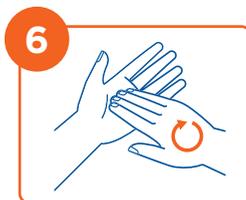
- Place palm to palm, fingers interlaced.



- Place back of fingers to opposing palm with fingers interlocked.
- Do likewise for the other hand.



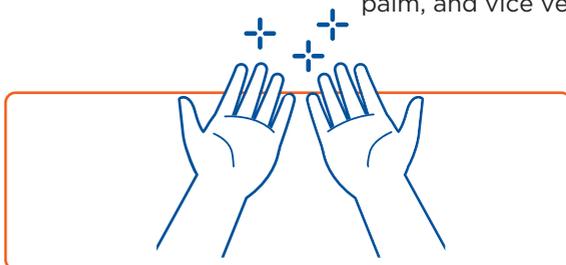
- Perform rotational rubbing of right thumb clasped in left palm, and vice versa.



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



- Perform rotational rubbing of right wrist and vice versa.
- Rinse and dry thoroughly.



Your hands are now clean!

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