

SOP OF BURIAL PRECAUTIONS OF A DECEASED COVID-19 PATIENT

This document is prepared based on scientific information regarding the COVID 19 pandemic by doctors of The Indus Hospital with the consultation of other experts in this field. This document is approved by Darul Uloom, Karachi.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES REGARDING INFECTIOUSNESS OF THE BODY OF A CONFIRMED COVID PATIENT:

- Secretions coming out of natural orifices e.g., mouth, nose, anus & vagina may harbor the virus
- People touching the body or coming in contact with body secretions can acquire the virus
- Adequate body disinfection in the hospital before handing it over to relatives virtually eliminates the risk, but as a precaution, appropriate protective clothing is still recommended in ghusl (body washing) & kafn.
- To date, there is no evidence of a person having become infected from exposure to the bodies of persons who died of COVID-19
- Hasty disposal of a dead body from COVID-19 should be avoided
- The dignity of the dead should be respected along with the safety of those involved in the burial

STEPS TO BE TAKEN IN THE HOSPITAL BY HOSPITAL STAFF BEFORE HANDING THE BODY TO RELATIVES:

- All tubes, drains, and catheters attached to the dead body should be removed
- Fill all openings or wounds the patient may have, such as mouth, nose, ears, anus and tracheotomy openings, by using cotton balls or gauze dipped in 0.5% chlorine solution
- Wrapping: Wrap the corpse with a double-layer cloth sheet soaked with 0.5% chlorine solution
- Pack it into a sealed, leak-proof plastic bag soaked with chlorine-containing disinfectant and then hand over to attendants
- Once the corpse has been removed, clean all the environmental surfaces with 0.5% chlorine solution

IDENTIFY PEOPLE WHO WILL HANDLE THE BODY IN THE FAMILY:

- It is advised that individuals who contact the corpse in ghusl and burial should be under 60 years of age and in good health. No one with significant comorbidities should handle the body.

TRANSPORTATION OF DEAD BODY FROM HOSPITAL:

- Must be in a designated vehicle, and distance of 1-meter must be maintained between the family members carrying the body on the vehicle. They must wear a surgical mask and keep the windows open
- Those who carry the dead body on a stretcher must wear a surgical mask and gloves. They must also wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds after removing gloves or sanitize their hands with 70% alcohol solution
- Disinfect the stretcher and vehicle interior with 0.5% hypochlorite solution

PRIOR TO HANDLING THE BODY:

- All burial management team members should be clear about their roles and responsibilities.
- Disinfectant solutions must be prepared for the same day:
 - 0.05% chlorine solution for hand hygiene/Alcohol-based hand sanitizer
 - 0.5% chlorine solution for disinfection of object and surfaces

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT FOR STAFF AND FAMILY MEMBERS INVOLVED IN HANDLING THE CORPSE:

- Disposable gloves (non-sterile, ambidextrous) / heavy-duty gloves
- Disposable impermeable plastic gown
- Face protection: goggles/ face shield and mask
- Footwear:
 - Rubber boots (recommended) OR if not available
 - Shoes with puncture-resistant soles and disposable overshoes
- Hand hygiene has to be performed by those handling the body as follows:
 - Before and after handling the body
 - After touching patient's surroundings

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SEQUENCE OF WEARING PPE:

- Wear shoe covers
- Perform Hand Hygiene
- Wear Gown
- Wear surgical mask with face shield
- Wear gloves

BATHING THE BODY:

- Bathing should be done as soon as possible after death, preferably within hours
- A team with the most trained volunteers with 2-4 members only and ensure all are dressed in PPE as per protocol. It is highly recommended the bathing is carried out by a specially trained team who got the training from government officials
- Wash the body in the usual way (ghusl) wearing the PPE mentioned above
- Avoid direct contact with blood and body fluids from the body
- Extra caution must be taken while handling the mouth, eyes, and nose and their respective passages, as well as the genitourinary system (private areas). These should be gently washed to avoid unnecessary expulsion of infectious material. Upon completion of the ghusl, dry body and dry the table underneath while rolling the body, from one side to another
- Make sure all open wounds are covered with bleach soaked cotton or gauze
- Upon completion of the ghusl, dry the body and the table underneath while rolling the body, from one side to another

SHROUDING THE BODY:

- The same ghusl team should perform shrouding to minimize exposure. This should ideally be done at the same location without having to transfer the body to another table or another room. In this case, there is no need to change PPE Shroud the body with kafn as normally done
- Place the body in the coffin as normal. It is recommended to pack it into a, sealed, leak-proof plastic bag soaked with chlorine. Wipe the exterior of the casket and trolley with 0.5% chlorine
- The body should then be transported to the mosque or cemetery
- Thoroughly clean all the environmental surfaces e.g washing table , with 0.5 % bleach after corpse has been removed after ghusl
- Any contaminated Linen should be washed wearing PPE

SEQUENCE OF REMOVING PPE AFTER BATHING AND SHROUDING:

- Shoe covers
- Gloves
- Gown
- Mask with face shield
- After removing PPE perform hand hygiene immediately
- Take a bath soon after, before interacting with family members
- All PPE should be considered infectious a disposed of in a sealed waste bag and sent for incineration

PREPARING THE BODY FOR FUNERAL

- Viewing can be arranged as normal in accordance with the wishes of the family.
- There is currently no known risk associated with being in the same room at a funeral or visitation service with the body of someone who died of COVID-19

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SANITIZATION OF FAMILY HOME & WASTE DISPOSAL:

- Clean with clean water and detergent and then disinfect with a suitable disinfectant (e.g., 0.5% chlorine solution) all rooms and annexes of the house that were possibly infected by the deceased patient. Special focus should be given to areas soiled by blood, nasal secretions, sputum, urine, stool and vomit
- Clean with water and detergent all objects (e.g. dishes...) possibly infected by the deceased patient; then disinfect with a chlorine solution 0.5%
- Gather in a plastic bag, bed linen, clothes and objects of the deceased, if any, that were not placed in the grave with the dead body. Ensure the bag is tightly closed, leak proof and disinfected

BURIAL AT THE CEMETERY:

- Manually carry the dead body to the grave, wearing gloves, followed by the funeral participants
- Slowly lower the dead body into the grave, with individuals wearing gloves
- Place the dead body into the grave
- Respect the time required for prayers
- Family members and their assistants should be allowed to close the grave.
- All those who carried the casket or participated in burial should be given hand sanitizer to clean their hands
- People involved in the funeral and burial process must take a bath after returning home

**Urdu version of this document is approved by
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CONTRIBUTIONS

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