

STRICTER SAFE DISTANCING MEASURES TO PREVENT FURTHER SPREAD OF COVID-19 CASES

 **20TH MAR 2020**

Singapore will implement stricter safe distancing measures to reduce the risk of further local transmission of COVID-19, especially for vulnerable segments of the population.

2. Even as we tighten our borders and isolate all imported cases, we must also redouble our efforts within Singapore to prevent further spread of the virus. The Ministry of Health (MOH) has studied the pattern of transmission amongst the locally transmitted cases, and found that many were infected during events and social gatherings, and interactions between colleagues at workplaces. In view of this, the Multi-Ministry Taskforce will introduce stricter safe distancing measures to limit close contact and large gatherings of people in close proximity over a prolonged duration.

3. These safe distancing measures must be stepped up urgently in tandem with our parallel efforts to tighten our borders, and to quarantine and ring-fence any infection clusters. All of these efforts, combined with good personal hygiene and social responsibility, can help to suppress the spread of COVID-19 in Singapore.

Safe distancing measures for the general population

Events and gatherings

4. Between now and 30 June 2020, all events and gatherings with 250 or more participants in attendance at any one time must be suspended. This is an expansion of the previous requirement for ticketed cultural, sports and entertainment events to be limited to fewer than 250 participants.

5. For events and gatherings with fewer than 250 participants, organisers and event venue operators are required to implement the necessary precautionary measures to ensure separation of at least a metre between participants. These measures include spaced seating at events, and reducing mingling of participants such as during meal times.

6. Events and gatherings must also comply with the existing guidance, including:

a. Improving ventilation and advising participants to reduce contact with others;

- b. Putting in place temperature and health screening measures, and turning away persons who are unwell; and
- c. Putting in place measures to facilitate contact tracing if needed, such as obtaining contact details of participants.

Public venues

7. Operators of venues which are accessible to the public are required to implement the necessary precautionary measures to ensure separation of at least a metre between patrons. For example:
- a. Queues (e.g. outside restaurants, at retail stores) should be kept fast-moving. This could be done by ensuring that all checkout counters are open, and encouraging self-checkout to minimise contact with counter staff. Operators are encouraged to demarcate queues to ensure patrons queue at least a metre apart from one another;
 - b. Food and beverage venues should maintain a distance of at least one metre between tables, and between seats. Where seats are fixed, including our hawker centres, operators should ensure alternate seats are marked out. Individuals and family members who wish to seat together should continue to do so, but there should be a safe distance maintained between different groups; and
 - c. Entertainment venues and attractions (e.g. cinemas/theatres, theme parks, casinos, museums and galleries) should adopt measures appropriate to their venue to ensure separation of at least a metre amongst patrons. This could include reducing operating capacity to provide more spacing, installing floor markers at queuing areas, and adopting chequerboard or alternate seating.
8. Members of the public are strongly advised to comply with safe distancing measures put in place by operators.

Workplaces

9. Employers are strongly advised to put in place measures to reduce close physical interactions amongst employees. All employers should facilitate telecommuting for their employees to work from home. Tele-conferencing should also be used in place of physical meetings wherever possible.
10. For employees undertaking job roles or functions where telecommuting is not feasible, employers should take the following precautions:
- a. Staggered working hours: Employers should implement staggered working hours (for both reporting and ending times) with minimally three one-hourly blocks and no more than 50 percent of total employees reporting to work within each one-hour block. Where possible, reporting and

ending times should not coincide with peak-hour travel, especially if employees require the use of public transport.

b. Reduce duration and proximity of physical interactions: Employers should provide for physical spacing (of at least one metre apart) between work stations. If there is a need for physical meetings, the number of attendees should be limited and the duration shortened. Seats in meeting rooms should also be spaced at least a metre apart.

c. Defer non-critical events and scale down critical work events: For critical work events that cannot be deferred, employers must limit these to no more than 250 participants at any point in time and put in place measures to ensure separation of at least a metre between participants. These include meals and mingling during the event.

11. The above requirements and advisories for events, gatherings, workplaces and public venues will be subject to further review based on the global and local situation.

Additional safe distancing measures for seniors

12. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), individuals who are of older age or have underlying conditions (e.g. heart disease, diabetes) have a higher risk of severe COVID-19 infection. In view of this, the Multi-Ministry Taskforce will take extra precautions to safeguard the wellbeing of our seniors.

Suspension of senior-centric activities

13. Since 11 March, all senior-centric activities at community clubs, residents' committees, Senior Activity Centres, Active Ageing Hubs, CREST Centres, Health Promotion Board and ActiveSG sport centres have been suspended for two weeks. National Silver Academy (NSA) courses and volunteer programmes administered by the Council for Third Age have also been suspended for the same period.¹

14. To continue to safeguard our seniors' wellbeing in the coming weeks, the suspension of the above activities will be extended for another 14 days, until 7 April. In addition, all organisers of activities that involve physical interactions amongst seniors should suspend such activities from 22 March to 7 April. These include senior-centric courses, activities and interest groups, as well as events, performances, and other gatherings targeted at seniors.

15. Organisers should put in place extra precautions in preparation for the resumption of organised activities after 7 April.

16. We encourage seniors to continue to be active during this period. Organisers of senior-centric activities are encouraged to organise activities which do not require close contact between seniors, such as by using online platforms. For example, seniors may tap on a new video series

broadcast on zaobao.sg that brings exercise, singing and cooking activities online for them. Conducted by trainers from the People's Association (PA), the video series enables active seniors to participate in these activities in the comfort of their own home.²

Advisory for seniors and caregivers

17. In addition to the safe distancing measures, we advise seniors to avoid crowded places as far as possible, and be vigilant in maintaining good personal hygiene, such as by washing their hands frequently and avoiding touching their face and eyes. Seniors who feel unwell should see a doctor.

18. Anyone interacting with seniors should also take extra care with personal hygiene. They should avoid interacting with seniors when they are unwell.

Social responsibility is key

19. Social responsibility is a critical factor in slowing the transmission of the virus. We need all Singaporeans to play their part in the fight against COVID-19. Singaporeans should therefore uphold these safe distancing principles for their own private get-togethers, even if these are being carried out in smaller groups. This means reducing the frequency of such activities, and minimising physical contact with one another. Those who are unwell, even with mild flu-like symptoms, should see a doctor and stay at home to prevent spreading illness to others. We must all do our part to protect ourselves, our family and friends, and the people around us.

20. The Multi-Ministry Taskforce will regularly review the safe distancing measures and calibrate them as the global and local situation evolves. Members of the public are advised to refer to the MOH website (<https://www.moh.gov.sg/covid-19> (<https://www.moh.gov.sg/covid-19>)) for the latest measures.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

20 MARCH 2020

[1] The list of activities which are suspended can be found on PA's and MyActiveSG's websites, as well as the Health Promotion Board's HealthHub portal or Healthy 365 mobile app.

[2] The initiative is a collaboration between the Ministry of Communications and Information, PA and Singapore Press Holdings' Chinese Media Group. Key messages on good hygiene practices will also be weaved into this programme to remind seniors of the important measures they can take to protect themselves.

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