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Guidelines

AITEKAF during COVID-19

Objective

To provide guidelines to the health authorities, religious leaders and masses planning for Aitekaf on education, preparedness, and response to reduce the potential risks of COVID-19 transmission associated during Aitekaf.

Rationale

In the context of COVID-19, social contacts and gatherings could amplify the transmission of the virus and potentially disrupt the country's response capacity. COVID-19 is transmitted from person to person through respiratory droplets and contact with contaminated surfaces, and the risk of transmission appears to be proportional to the closeness (less than 2 meter) and frequency of the interaction between an infected individual and an unaffected individual. As the last Ashra of Ramzan is approaching, people are planning for Aitekaf, but in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, religious authorities, administration of mosques, local authorities and people volunteering for Aitekaf should ensure to implement prevention and control measures to reduce the risk of transmission or the potential strain on health services.

Role of Religious Leaders in COVID19 education and sensitization especially during Ramzan and Aitekaf

As Aitekaf are being planned, religious leaders and communities should take the following steps to reduce the threat of COVID-19 transmission.

- Ensure that accurate information is shared with communities specially mautakifeen regarding preventive measure for COVID19 and address the misinformation.
- Ensure that SOPs are followed and observed unconditionally in mosques during prayers and Aitekaf days
- Address the issues of stigma, violence, and the incitement of hate.
- Strengthening mental and spiritual health, well-being, and resilience through social and other communications media.



Protocol

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR MUTAKIFEEN (PEOPLE SITTING IN AITEKAF)

- People with symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, sore throat, cough) must avoid sitting in Aitekaf in masjid. They should do so at home
- People who wish to sit in Aitekaf may bring their own prayer mats and hanging curtains / separators from home;
- Mattresses, pillows, floor mats and utensils should be brought from home
- Mattress, pillows and utensils must not be shared with other people
- The floors of the Aitekaf area should be cleaned with chlorine solution in water.
- Chlorine solution should be used to wipe the chatais before and after namaz.
- Rows of the praying individuals should be aligned so that there is a distance of 03 feet (1 meter) between individuals. There is an attached map which can assist in achieving this.
- This is desirable that Aitekaf rooms / partitions have proper arrangement of ventilation and windows which should be kept open for ventilation.
- Masks should be worn while offering prayers in jamaat.
- Collective Sehri and Iftar must be avoided in enclosed spaces.
- Mutakif may have enough masks, soap and hand sanitizers to be properly used during the whole duration of Aitekaf
- Crowding the ablution area must be avoided
- If Mutakif develops any of the COVID-19 symptoms, he may avoid going outside partition and immediately inform the Imam Masjid to seek medical help or consultation.
- To seek immediate help, 1166 helpline may be accessed for further support.

SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS FOR MOSQUE ADMINISTRATIONS / IMAM MASJID

- Religious leaders / Imam Masjids may focus safety protocols for Aitekaf during Friday and routine sermons
- Before sitting for Aitekaf, all mautakifeen may be properly educated on COVID-19 signs, symptoms and safety measures
- Imam Masjid / Administration of the mosque may ensure that no sick / ill person is sitting in Aitekaf
- Imam Masjid / Administration of the mosque may ensure that floors, door handles and ablution areas and wash rooms are properly cleaned with chlorine solution
- Imam Masjid / Administration of the mosque may ensure that soaps are present in the ablution and handwashing areas for proper hand washing
- In case of any Mutakif develop signs and symptoms of COVID-19, the mosque committee may contact health authorities or access help through 1166.



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 & national recommendations and best practices.

The Ministry acknowledges the contribution of Muhammad Salman and HSA/ HPSIU/ NIH team to compile these guidelines.

References:

1. Ramzan Guidelines during COVID-19: https://www.nih.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/20210402-Ramzan-guidelines-during-COVID-19_6102.pdf
2. Questions on Corona: Daar-ul Afta, Jamia Islamia Banori Town: banuri.edu.pk
3. World Health Organization. Practical considerations and recommendations for religious leaders and faith-based communities in the context of COVID-19, Interim guidance, April 2020
4. Safe Ramadan practices in the context of the COVID-19
<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331767/WHO-2019-nCoV-Ramadan-2020.1-eng.pdf>

For more information, please contact:

HSA/ HPSIU/ NIH, PM National Health Complex, Islamabad

<http://covid.gov.pk/>

<http://nhsrcofficial.gov.pk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/NHSRCOfficial>

<http://www.hsa.edu.pk/>

<https://twitter.com/nhsrcofficial>

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<https://www.youtube.com/NHSRC-PK>