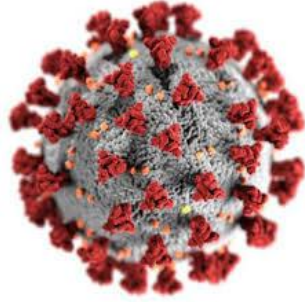


**Version 1**



**GUIDELINE ON WORK PLACE SAFETY  
DURING COVID-19  
14.06.2020**

**Health Protection Agency**  
Ministry of Health

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## ABBREVIATION

COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
HPA	Health Protection Agency
IPC	Infection Prevention and Control
MOH	Ministry of Health
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
WHO	World Health Organization
WAMCO	Waste Management Corporation Limited

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

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COVID-19 is a respiratory illness and the transmission route is through person-to-person contact and through direct contact with respiratory droplets generated when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can be inhaled or can land on objects and surfaces around the person such as tables, doorknobs and handrails, hence people can become infected-by touching these objects or surfaces and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth (WHO, 2020).

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, dry cough, and tiredness. Other symptoms that may be seen less often and may affect some persons include aches and pains, nasal congestion, headache, conjunctivitis, sore throat, diarrhoea, loss of taste or smell or a rash on skin or discoloration of fingers/toes. However, a person may also be asymptomatic or may have very mild symptoms (WHO, 2020).

To prevent the transmission of COVID-19 in the workplace, it is important that all offices and work places develop or adopt and implement a clear plan to prevent the risks of transmission of COVID-19 in their workplaces. Responsibilities of the employer, employees and customers/visitors remain including physical distancing, hand wash and hygiene, respiratory hygiene, environmental hygiene, waste management and clear roles (OSHA, 2020)

The purpose of this guideline is to give a general guidance for non-health care workplace settings to ensure protective measures are followed by the employers and employees. It also gives guidance on the necessary measures for specialised workplaces with different exposure risks and specific recommendations for protection of the health and safety of all the workers.

### **Principles:**

The guideline is based on the five main safety principles that has to be followed by everyone in the work place;

1. Wear clothe masks at all times (refer to COVID19 webpage <https://covid19.health.gov.mv/>)
2. Ensure respiratory and hand hygiene etiquettes
3. Ensure physical distancing (maintain at least 3 feet gap between persons)
4. Ensure Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures including cleaning and disinfection procedures (refer to COVID19 webpage <https://covid19.health.gov.mv/>)

5. Decreasing contact between different shifts/ teams to ensure business continuity even if one employee becomes positive for Covid-19 and their contacts have to go into quarantine.

When making individual plans for different types of workplaces, the above principles should be considered and adhered to.

## 2. WORKPLACE RISK ASSESSMENT AND ACTION PLAN

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### **Workplace Risk Assessment**

The risk of work-related exposure to COVID-19 depends on the probability of coming into close (less than 3 feet) or frequent contact with people who may be infected with COVID-19 and through contact with contaminated surfaces and objects. (WHO, 2020)

In the same work setting there may be jobs with different levels of risk or may have similar levels of exposure. Therefore, the risk assessment should be carried out for each specific work setting and each job or group of jobs considering the work environment, the processes involved in doing a task, the level of threat(if any) (e.g. for frontline staff), and resources available, such as PPE. (WHO, 2020)

The following risk levels may be useful in carrying out a workplace risk assessment for exposure to COVID-19 and planning for preventive measures in non-healthcare workplaces. (WHO, 2020)

#### **1. Low exposure risk:**

- Jobs or work tasks without frequent, close contact with the general public and other co-workers, visitors, clients or customers, or contractors, and that do not require contact with people known to be or suspected of being infected with COVID-19.
- Workers in this category have minimal occupational contact with the public and other co-workers

## **2. Medium exposure risk:**

- Jobs or work tasks with close, frequent contact with the general public, or other co-workers, visitors, clients or customers, or contractors, but that do not require contact with people known to be or suspected of being infected with COVID-19.
- In areas where COVID-19 cases continue to be reported, this risk level may be applicable to workers who have work-related frequent and close contact with the general public, visitors, or customers, etc.
- Work tasks that require close and frequent contact between co-workers.
- In areas without community transmission of COVID-19, work tasks that require frequent contact with persons returning from areas with community transmission

## **3. High exposure risk:**

- Jobs or work tasks with high potential for close contact with people who are known or suspected of having COVID-19, as well as contact with objects and surfaces possibly contaminated with the virus.
- Examples include:
  - transportation of persons known or suspected to have COVID-19 in enclosed vehicles without separation between the driver and the passenger,
  - providing domestic services or home care for people with COVID-19,
  - contact with dead bodies of persons who were known or suspected of having COVID-19 at the time of their death.

### **Plan of action:**

1. Workplaces should develop action plans for prevention and mitigation of COVID-19 as part of the business continuity plan and according to the results of the risks assessment and based on the current situation. (WHO, 2020)
2. The plan should also include measures for protecting health, safety, and security in re-opening, closing, and modifying workplaces and work arrangements. (WHO, 2020)
3. Re-opening of workplaces should be carefully planned in advance and all possible risks for health and safety should be properly assessed and controlled. (WHO, 2020)

### 3. GENERAL CONDITIONS

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1. To help with the transition, consider gradual re-opening of workplace activities (e.g. reduced number of activities) at the start of the return to work period.
2. Determine which workers should return to work first based on the needs of the organisation.
3. Consideration should be given to compliance with ongoing restrictions regarding workplace operations and compliance with health precautions such as physical distancing.
4. To limit the congestion in the workplace, flexible working hours and staggering start times, breaks or staggering days that workers are in the workplace can be considered.
5. Prepare the workplace for the return of workers, look into the workplace layout and implement changes to allow for physical distancing, put in place a plan for systematic cleaning and disinfection of workspaces, etc., and stocking up on cleaning supplies and any protective equipment that are required.
6. As the epidemiological situation changes the requirements may change rapidly and will need to be incorporated into workplace policies and practices.
7. Inform and educate all workers about COVID-19 including topics such as COVID-19 symptoms prevention measures, current restrictions (e.g. travel bans), and the rationale behind physical distancing.
8. Ensure instruction and easy to understand media and signs are placed in an easy visible manner and in Dhivehi and English and any other language as may be needed.
9. Make sure all workers are well aware of “return to work” plans and procedures.
10. Take steps to support the mental well-being of workers, taking into account the diversity of circumstances.
11. Managers and supervisor’s should repeatedly emphasise/remind the ongoing requirements for preventive and protective measures, and ensure that they are being consistently applied.
12. If possible, avoid mixing different teams of workers in the same space at the same time.

13. Encourage all workers to use 'TraceEkee' app

If any worker is quarantined or isolated allowances should be given for the required leaves. Allowances on working from home should be arranged to the workers who live in under monitoring homes/apartments/buildings



## 4. PHYSICAL WORKPLACE

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### Reception Areas

1. Ensure pre-screening (temperature screening) of workers and customers at the entry point.
2. Visible partition should be installed at the main reception, service counters or check-in points.
3. Re-arrange seating area of the reception, customer waiting area and any similar waiting area to facilitate physical distancing and a minimum of 3 feet between persons.
4. To maintain hygiene and avoid contamination, remove materials such as leaflets, application forms etc., from the general display and keep them inside a counter to be given from the counter directly to the customer seeking it. Online filling and submission of forms should be encouraged where possible.
5. Minimise interactions between customers and employees, such as limiting the number of customers permitted at the establishment or serving customers over phone or establishing online applications for services provided. Consider different timings for different services to reduce crowding.
6. Establish online queue system for services and encourage customers to use these services where applicable. Alternatively, move to an online appointment system if possible.
7. Encourage cashless payment methods. Establish systems for cashless transactions before opening up services.
8. Place sanitising hand rub dispensers for employees and for customers/clients. Make sure these dispensers are regularly refilled
9. Display posters, promoting preventive measures against COVID-19. Posters/ standee banners/ audio visual media to increase awareness on COVID-19 should be displayed prominently at entrances and within the workplace. Ensure that these are appropriate for the employee's/ customers language preferences.
10. Keep a record of clients who entered the premises and the staff who interacted with the client. They may be needed for contact tracing.

## Lift

1. It is advisable to mark the number of people who can enter lift at one time to ensure physical distancing, if possible markings on the floor of limit to show where to stand, to limit the number of people using the elevator at the same time.
2. Encourage workers to avoid using elevators whenever possible. If this is not possible, limit the number of people using the elevator at the same time. Instruct employees to to keep distance as marked in the lift and to stand back to back inside the lift.
3. Lift buttons are a high touch surface that needs to be frequently cleaned and disinfected.
4. Ensure entry areas in front of lift do not get crowded.

## Workstation Areas

1. Assess how many work stations are at the work place.
2. Work stations should be arranged to accommodate minimum 3 feet physical distancing.
3. Encourage workers to clean their own workstations, used equipments, items, etc.
4. Ensure a good supply of cleaning agents are available.
5. If workstations are shared, they should be cleaned at the end of every shift.

## Conference / meeting rooms

1. Arrange chairs at minimum 3 feet distance.
2. Encourage virtual communications/video meetings as much as possible.
3. Tea/ coffee making facility (if provided) must be in a manner that minimises contact .

## Toilet facilities

1. Remind all staff to wash hands with soap and water after using the toilet.
2. Respect physical distancing as much as possible, for example limiting the number of people present in the toilet area/ toilet que at the same time.
3. Ensure availability of liquid soap to wash hands (rather than a bar soap), and paper towels to dry hands (rather than towels or electric dryers).
4. Ensure closed lidded bins are placed, which are lined with bags.
5. Ensure regular cleaning of toilet facilities (preferably every 4 hours, based on the frequency/number of people using the toilet) and disinfection at the end of each work day.

## Tea room

1. Minimise number of employees who use the tea room at the same time.
2. Promote regular and thorough hand washing prior to entering the tea room
3. Re-arrange the canteen area to enable physical distancing measures (i.e. place tables and chairs with recommended physical distancing, limit the number of chairs at each table).
4. Keep tea room areas clean and hygienic, especially the utensils such as cutlery, tableware, and glasses. Employees should be encouraged not to share utensils (cups, plates, cutlery).

## Ventilation

1. In the context of COVID-19 it is advised to ensure proper ventilation in rooms/spaces of the workplace.
2. In air-conditioned workplaces, it is recommended to open the windows for some time during each shift for air circulation
3. Ensure regular airing by opening the windows even in mechanically ventilated buildings.
4. In buildings with mechanical ventilation consider switching ventilation to nominal speed at least 2 hours before the start of the building usage time and switching to lower speed 2 hours after the end of the building usage time.

## Physical distancing measures

1. Introduce measures to keep minimum 3 feet distance between people and avoid direct physical contact with other persons (i.e. shaking hands, hugging, touching, etc.)
2. Strict control over external access and queue management (eg, marking on the floor, barriers).
3. Suspend workplace events/gatherings that involve close and prolonged contact among participants, including social gatherings.
4. Nominate a person to be responsible at the entrance for managing the waiting area floor to remind and keep customers / staffs in the required 3 feet distance. Wherever possible organise separate entry and exit for workers and visitors.
5. Employees should reduce movement within the workplace and those working in one area should refrain from going into other areas.

### Measures to limit the number of high touch/high traffic areas

1. Leave some internal doorways open (bearing in mind fire doors).
2. Discourage staff from sharing common office supplies (e.g. pens, staplers) and items such as cups, plates and cutlery.
3. Remove magazines and newspapers from reception areas

## 5. PERSONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL HYGIENE MEASURES

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### Environmental Hygiene measures

#### *Cleaning and disinfection of work places and facilities*

1. Establish daily cleaning protocols to ensure workplace, workstations, and facilities are clean and tidy.
2. For cleaning use soap or a detergent, water, and mechanical action (brushing, scrubbing) to remove dirt, debris, and other materials from surfaces.
3. Frequently touched surfaces/high traffic areas such as door and window handles, light switches, touchscreen personal devices, personal computer keyboards, work surfaces, buttons of elevator doors, toilet doors and surfaces, washbasin taps, soap dispensers, kitchen and food preparation areas, etc., must be with soap and detergent several times a day or at least every 4 hourly or when visibly dirty.
4. Daily clean the toilets with detergent and water and disinfect with bleach solution.
  - a. Bleach Solution - Mix 120 ml bleach (1/2 cup) and 1000ml water (ratio 1:9). The solution must be used within 24 hours, and the bottle/container must be properly labelled with name and date and must be kept with the cleaning products. Bleach is not advised for cleaning metal products as it may corrode.
  - b. 70% alcohol based solutions (wipes or liquid) can be used to disinfect metal products.
  - c. It is not advised to SPRAY BLEACH solution or any disinfectant solution to the surfaces or areas or public spaces.
5. Vomitus or respiratory secretions or any other fluids must be wiped with tissue/paper/dirty cloth (discard after cleaning), first clean with soap and water and then disinfect with bleach solution.
6. Places where large numbers of public gather regularly such as ATMs, banks, shops, eateries, airports, universities, schools, and other such places should be cleaned with detergent and water at least twice a day.
7. When diluting and cleaning with bleach solution the cleaning staff must ensure to wear mask and heavy duty gloves and wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitiser before wearing and after removal of gloves.

8. Cleaning staff (in house or outsourced) should be educated on proper procedures of putting on and removing gloves and masks, cleaning and disinfection procedures and hand washing/sanitising.
9. Spraying of people with disinfectants or disinfection by any other method is NOT RECOMMENDED under any circumstances (WHO, 2020).
10. In indoor workplaces, routine application of disinfectants to environmental surfaces via spraying or fogging or large-scale spraying or fumigation is NOT RECOMMENDED by WHO, as it is ineffective at removing contaminants outside of direct spray zones. Spraying can cause eye, respiratory, skin irritation and other toxic effects.

### *Waste management*

1. Keep adequate amounts of lined, lidded foot operating dustbins in the workplace and a separate area to keep wastes till the collection from WAMCO.
2. When 2/3rd of the waste bin is full, remove and tie the bag properly.
3. Arrange to remove waste from the building daily.
4. Set up a system for disposing bin contents and disinfecting bins.

### *Personal Hygiene*

#### *Hand washing*

1. Hand hygiene is extremely important in the prevention of the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Ensure that workers have facilities to wash their hands properly and regularly with soap and water.
2. Encourage employees to wash hands frequently when in office for at least 20 seconds, especially upon arrival at work, after using toilet, after blowing their nose/coughing/sneezing, and before eating.
3. Remind employees that hands need to be washed frequently, with soap and water.
4. Place posters and signs promoting correct hand washing (bright clear infographics without too much accompanying text seem to be the most effective).
5. Provide alcohol-based hand sanitisers (containing 70% alcohol) in places where it is not possible to wash hands with soap and water.
6. Instruct workers to avoid contact with objects or surfaces used or touched by other people (e.g. door handles) and to wash hands after contact with such surfaces or objects.

### *Respiratory hygiene*

1. Promote respiratory etiquette by all people at the workplace.
2. Encourage to wear face masks and follow the procedures in line with the SOP's in COVID-19 website.
3. Remind workers about the need to cover coughs or sneezes with a tissue or elbow and to immediately discard the used tissues.
4. Place posters and signs reminding workers that they should avoid touching their nose, eyes or mouth.

## 6. MEASURES TO CONSIDER INSIDE THE WORKPLACE

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### Measures inside the workplace

1. Instruct workers not to go to rooms or places where they do not have to be present or if they do not have a particular task to do.
2. Remind workers to respect minimum 3 feet physical distancing rules when moving across the workspace to the full extent possible.
3. Use tools such as floor markings or tapes to indicate safe walkways as clearly as possible.
4. Consider introducing one-way traffic or priority rules on narrow stairs where people cannot keep a sufficient distance when passing each other (for example, priority for those coming down).
5. Consider introducing one-way traffic in corridors where people meet often or without sufficient distance.

### Meetings and travels

1. Cancel or postpone all non-essential meetings, trainings and travels.
2. Use alternatives to face-to-face meetings, such as video conferencing and online meetings.
3. If a face-to-face meeting is necessary, reduce the number of attendees based in adequate size of the room to ensure physical distance, and keep the room clean and well ventilated. Consider keeping the list and contact details of the meeting participants for at least 14 days to facilitate contact tracing if need be.

4. For meeting rooms, consider indicating the maximum number of people that can safely stay in the room at the same time while ensuring physical distancing.
5. During meetings minimize touching surfaces and minimize the use of paper.

## 7. IMPORTANT ADVICE TO THE EMPLOYEES

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Before leaving home:

Instruct employees to stay home if they develop any symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, any respiratory symptoms, etc), inform supervisor and call hotline **1676**.

Transport to and from work

1. For short distances, encourage workers to come to work on foot or by bicycle.
2. Encourage workers to avoid public transport, especially at peak times. The workers who need to travel by public transport should follow the transport guidelines published (refer to COVID19 webpage <https://covid19.health.gov.mv/>)
3. Remind workers about the importance of maintaining good hand and respiratory hygiene before, during and after travel.
4. If an employer provides transport (e.g. a van or a bus, ferry, etc) follow the guidelines published (refer to COVID19 webpage <https://covid19.health.gov.mv/>) Physical distancing must be maintained when workers are being transported.

Leaving the workplace

1. Instruct the workers to wash their hands before exiting the workplace.
2. As much as possible, spread out the exit times, to avoid congestion.
3. Remind workers to wash hands upon arrival at home.



## 8. RESPONSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYER

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### Managing employee numbers with phased return

1. Managing the number of workers will be critical in protecting worker's health.
2. Assess and identify vulnerable groups (workers with underlying health conditions (list in Annex 1) and those above 60 years of age). They should be given opportunity to work from home or make other arrangements, till the situation returns to normal.
3. Set up ways to communicate with workers online and communicate with them daily.
4. Make arrangements for staffs to work in shifts (preferably the same group of people who work together in the same days/shifts) and then arrange shift duties to ensure physical distancing is maintained, especially in workplaces that may become crowded at times. For high risk groups arrange for work from home option where possible.
5. A long-term plan should be made to address the overcrowding at workplaces, in order to arrange workstations at 3 feet distance including workspace between each station.
6. Implement flexible sick leave policies and practices, and flexible work hours, if feasible.
7. Arrange shifts and work timings to ensure as little mixing as possible between groups of employees.
8. Also consider cross-training of employees in the most critical functions. If employer is providing accommodation, consider segregating employees who work together.

## 9. MANAGEMENT OF SICK EMPLOYEES

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Workplaces should have a plan on what should be done if a worker develops COVID-19 symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, etc., while at the workplace.

The following should be considered:

1. Employee/ Employees with symptoms (fever, cough, or shortness of breath) at work should immediately be isolated from others (preferably in a separate room, keep the windows open for ventilation), provide a surgical mask if possible and inform the hotline 1676 or reach out to the nearest flu clinic and follow the advice given.
2. In case of an emergency (a worker has severe symptoms such as shortness of breath), call ambulance services and report to ER immediately followed by reporting to 1676.
3. Restrict contact with the staff to what is absolutely necessary. Any person providing assistance to him/her should wear a mask and gloves
4. Clean the areas used by the affected worker in line with the guidance published (refer to COVID19 webpage <https://covid19.health.gov.mv/>)
5. Follow the instructions of the HPA and collaborate with them in any epidemiological investigation. Identify the affected worker's close contacts among co-workers (up to 2 days prior to the symptom onset) to identify other workers who could be considered as being exposed.
6. Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone sick to a healthcare facility or wherever applicable with HPA guidance.

## 10. RESPONSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYEE, FOR IPC AT WORKPLACE

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1. The employee must ensure self-monitoring for fever or respiratory symptoms. If any symptoms develop stay home and report to supervisor and call 1676.
2. Be up to date with the COVID-19 related information shared by relevant authorities.
3. Ensure to maintain physical distancing (minimum 3 feet between persons) at all times in the workplace and when taking breaks.
4. The employee must wear face mask at all times if tolerated (refer to COVID19 webpage <https://covid19.health.gov.mv/>)
5. Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
6. When coughing or sneezing, cover mouth and nose with tissue or cover with flexed elbow. Immediately discard the used tissue in a dustbin.

7. Wash hands frequently with soap and water (wash for at least 20 seconds) (Refer to Annex 2)
8. Employee must follow the hygiene etiquettes:
  - o Proper disposal of used tissues
  - o Used cloth masks that are reusable should be kept in a zipped cloth pouch, separate from clean masks. They should be washed before reuse.
  - o Clean the frequently touched areas in work stations.

## 11. RISK COMMUNICATION, TRAINING AND EDUCATION

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1. Provide posters, videos, and electronic message boards to increase awareness of COVID-19 among workers, promote safe individual practices at the workplace, engage workers in providing feedback on the preventive measures and their effectiveness (WHO, 2020).
2. Provide regular information about the risk of COVID-19 using information shared from HPA and emphasise the effectiveness of adopting protective measures and counteracting rumours and misinformation (WHO, 2020).
3. Special attention should be given to reaching out to engage vulnerable and marginalised groups of workers, such as migrant workers (WHO, 2020), and people with disabilities.

## 12. SPECIFIC INSTRUCTION FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF BANKS

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Have a COVID-19 preparedness plan, which includes appointing a suitable officer responsible for implementing and monitoring the plan and staff orientation on new normalcy.

1. Frequently clean commonly touched surfaces like cash counters, ATMs, common telephones, fax machines, printer, fingerprint scanners, desks public seats, etc.
2. Arrange the floor plan with minimum 3 feet spacing at queuing areas.
3. Recommend the customers to first consider using E-banking or ATM for day-to-day business.
4. Rearrange the business hours or arrange for prior appointments to accommodate the minimum number of customers at a time.
5. Ensure adequate hand wash facilities for the employees and encourage use of personal hand sanitizer when needed.

## REFERENCE

1. (WHO 2020) Considerations for the public health and social measures in the workplace in the context of COVID-19, 10 March 2020,  
[https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/332050/WHO-2019-nCoV-Adjusting\\_PH\\_measures-Workplaces-2020.1-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/332050/WHO-2019-nCoV-Adjusting_PH_measures-Workplaces-2020.1-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)
2. (ILO 2020) Safe return to work: guide for employers on COVI-19 prevention  
[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_dialogue/---act\\_emp/documents/publication/wcms\\_744033.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---act_emp/documents/publication/wcms_744033.pdf)
3. (OSHA 2020) Guidance on preparing workplaces for COVID-19  
<https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>


## ANNEX I: HIGH RISK CATEGORIES OF UNDERLYING MEDICAL CONDITIONS FOR COVID-19

1. Asthma (moderate to severe)
2. Chronic kidney disease
3. Chronic lung disease
4. Diabetes
5. Hemoglobin disorder (Thalassemia, sick cell anemia)
6. Immunocompromised (HIV, Cancer, organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, prolonged use of corticosteroids)
7. Chronic liver disease
8. Severe obesity
9. Serious Heart Conditions (heart failure, coronary artery disease, congenital heart disease, cardiomyopathies, pulmonary hypertension)
10. In addition, those who are above 60 years are considered high risk.

# Hand Hygiene Techniques

## HOW TO HANDWASH?

with Soap and water

 **Duration:** At least 20 seconds



0 Wet hands with water;



1 Apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces;



2 Rub hands palm to palm;



3 Right palm over left dorsum with interlaced fingers and vice versa;



4 Palm to palm with fingers interlaced;



5 Backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked;



6 Rotational rubbing of left thumb clasped in right palm and vice versa;



7 Rotational rubbing, backwards and forwards with clasped fingers of right hand in left palm and vice versa;



8 Rub each wrist with opposite hand;



9 Rinse hands with water;



10 Use tissue to turn off faucet;



11 Dry hands thoroughly with a tissue;



12 Your hands are safe.

