

COVID-19 Fact Sheet

Advice for Religious and Faith Communities

This fact sheet provides advice for religious leaders, faith organisations and communities to reduce the risk of COVID-19 as they continue to practice their faith, offer services and maintain connection with community members.

Encourage your community to stay home when they are sick

- Any person who is unwell and/ or has cold or flu symptoms, no matter how mild, must stay home, and should get tested for COVID-19.

Practice good hygiene

- Wash hands regularly with soap and water, or use alcohol-based sanitiser.
- Encourage good hygiene among attendees by providing hand washing facilities.
- Provide clean tissues with bins for disposal.
- If ablutions are part of the faith practice, it is recommended that these are done before attending the place of worship where possible to avoid use of communal facilities.

Regularly clean

- Routinely clean areas and sites where people gather.
- Thoroughly clean frequently touched surfaces and objects (for example, door handles, light switches).

Physical distancing and venue limits

- Venues must follow density requirements – a maximum of 1 person per 2 square metres with a maximum of 100 people for funerals and weddings.
- People should be kept 1.5 metres apart, wherever and whenever possible. This does not apply to family groups.
- Seating, prayer and other activities that involve groups should be arranged in a way that allows for physical distancing.
- Ensure physical distancing is possible in areas where crowds may gather, such as at entrances or exits of buildings.

Consider other ways of offering services

- Consider conducting services online to allow those who do not wish to attend in person to still participate safely.
- Consider offering multiple services at different times to reduce number of attendees at any one service.
- Consider hosting a gathering outdoors if possible. If not, ensure adequate ventilation indoors.

Singing

- Singing increases the distance that droplets from the mouth can travel and spread, so spacing people more than 1.5 metres apart is advised when singing.
- Avoid singing together as a congregation. Consider designating one person, or a very small group of people who can maintain physical distancing, to sing at gatherings.

COVID-19 Fact Sheet

Advice for Religious and Faith Communities

Encourage different ways of greeting

- Encourage new forms of greeting that do not involve physical contact.
- Avoid rituals that involve touching between individuals.

Avoid sharing or communal food and objects

- Use single-serve portions of food and drink, including wine and wafers used in communion, and avoid serving shared portions from communal containers.
- If utensils cannot be cleaned and sanitised at time of use in a dishwasher or food-grade sanitiser, consider single-use utensils.
- Avoid sharing or touching objects that have customarily been shared or handled by multiple people, such as statues or icons, fonts of holy water, and prayer or hymn books. Provide each participant individually with the object or objects involved in the ritual or practice and clean in between each service or gathering.

Encourage people to bring their own prayer mat.

- Individual prayer mats should be used rather than communal floor surfaces. Encourage people to bring their own prayer mats.

Funeral practices

- If the faith tradition involves washing or shrouding the body of a deceased loved one, people conducting these activities should wear personal protective equipment such as gloves, and additional equipment such as gowns and face masks.
- Avoid touching the body during viewings of deceased people.

Stay connected to your community

- Religious leaders and members of the faith community are strongly encouraged to maintain connection to other members, especially those who are isolated.
- They are also encouraged, to provide support to those who are vulnerable such as older people or those with a disability during these difficult times.
- Leaders are in a unique position as role models to adapt practices to maintain connection in their faith communities while reinforcing these recommendations for a COVID safe recovery.

More information

Visit the SA Health website at www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/covid2019 for more information on cleaning, personal protective equipment, hand hygiene and stopping the spread of COVID-19.

For more information

SA COVID-19 Information Line 1800 253 787
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID2019

Health Regulation and Protection
Department for Health and Wellbeing
SA Health, Government of South Australia

