

Dhulikhel Hospital
Kathmandu University Hospital
Guidelines for management of the dead body of COVID-19

Background

- To date there is no evidence of persons having become infected from exposure to the bodies of persons who died from COVID-19. The dignity of the dead, their cultural and religious traditions, and their families should be respected and protected throughout.
- Do not perform hasty disposal of any dead from COVID-19 and authorities should manage each situation on a case-by-case basis, balancing the rights of the family, the need to investigate the cause of death and the risks of exposure to infection.
- When preparing and packing the dead body for transfer from a ward to mortuary or crematorium or burial site, ensure that personnel who interact with the body should take standard precautions while handling dead bodies of COVID.
- Standard infection prevention control practices should be followed at all times which includes hand hygiene, use of personal protective equipment (e.g., water resistant apron, gloves, masks and eyewear) and safe handling of sharps.

1. Removal of the dead body from the isolation room or area

The health worker (on duty doctors/nurses) attending to the dead body should use proper PPE (water resistant apron, goggles, surgical mask and gloves) before handling the body.

- All suspected COVID-19 dead bodies swab should be taken by on duty doctors/nurses
- All tubes, drains and catheters on the dead body should be removed and any puncture holes or wounds (resulting from removal of catheter, drains, tubes, or otherwise) should be disinfected with 0.1% sodium hypochloride or 0.4% virex solution and dressed with adhesive band.
- Caution should be taken while handling sharps instruments or devices such as intravenous catheters. They should be disposed into a sharps container.
- Close all oral, nasal orifices of the dead body with cotton to prevent leakage of body fluids.



- If the family of the patient wishes to view the body at the time of removal from the isolation room or area, they may be allowed to do so with the application of Standard Precautions.
- First put the dead body in leak-proof dead body bag then the exterior of the body bag can be decontaminated with 0.1% sodium hypochloride or 0.4% virex solution. The body bag can be wrapped with another plastic sheet and again decontaminated with 0.1% sodium hypochloride or 0.4% virex solution. Then the body will be handed over to the relatives.
- Used equipment should be autoclaved or decontaminated with disinfectant solutions in accordance with established infection prevention control practices.
- All medical waste must be handled and disposed of in accordance with Bio-medical waste management rules.
- The health staff who handled the body will remove personal protective equipment, properly dispose or disinfect and will perform hand hygiene.
- Provide proper counseling to the family members especially about precautions during final rites with due respect for their sentiments.

2. Transportation

- The body, secured in a body bag, exterior of which is decontaminated poses no additional risk to the staff transporting the dead body.
- The personnel handling the body may follow standard precautions (surgical mask, gloves, head cover).
- The vehicle, after the transfer of the body to cremation/ burial site should be decontaminated with 0.5% chlorine solution.

3. At the crematorium/ Burial Ground

- The Crematorium/ burial Ground staff should be sensitized that COVID 19 does not pose additional risk.
- Outer plastic bag should be removed before crematorium.(To avoid burning of plastic)
- The staff will practice standard precautions of hand hygiene, use of masks and gloves.
- Viewing of the dead body by unzipping the face end of the body bag (by the staff using standard precautions) may be allowed, for the relatives to see the body for one last time.



- Religious rituals such as reading from religious scripts, sprinkling holy water and any other last rites that does not require touching of the body can be allowed.
- Bathing, kissing, hugging, etc. of the dead body should not be allowed.
- The funeral/ burial staff and family members should perform hand hygiene after cremation/ burial.
- The ash does not pose any risk and can be collected to perform the last rites.
- Large gathering at the crematorium/ burial ground should be avoided as a social distancing measure as it is possible that close family contacts may be symptomatic and/ or shedding the virus.

References:

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