



SHIA MUSLIM COUNCIL OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Guidance on the Transport & Handling of Dead Bodies infected or possibly infected with COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

The following information was adopted from NASIMCO and World Federation COVID-19 Task Force publication on this matter, published on March 22, 2020.

The guidance below applies to those deceased infected, or highly suspected to have been infected with COVID-19. Immediately after death or as soon as is practically possible the body needs to be disinfected to limit further spread of the virus.

The religious guidelines have been developed in accordance with the rulings of Ayatullah Syed Ali Sistani (May the Almighty protect him and prolong his life).

Based on the guidance from our Marja and the advice of our local medical professionals, The COVID-19 Task Force recommends that each Community perform only one of the 2 options when faced with a deceased body with confirmed or highly suspected COVID-19 infection.

Option 1 – Perform Tayyamu with minimal/essential opening of the body bag. Ablution and shrouding to be administered on top of the body bag (which should preferably be placed within a coffin). It is strongly recommended that the deceased be taken to a funeral home/medical facility that has precautionary measures in place for handling COVID-19 cases. Tayyamu is recommended to be performed by a medical professional with expertise in Islamic ablution/shourding procedures, or using the proper PPE procedure guidelines, under the supervision of a medical professional. During this process, adherence should be to only those acts which are obligatory.

Option 2 – Bury the body without ablution (Tayyamu) or shourding. This option should be taken if it is unknown or NOT confident that their community has the necessary resources or expertise to manage all the infection control measures via a medical professional or any COVID-19 approved funeral homes. It is especially important to take this option where the law of the city or country prohibits the community from opening a body bag or transporting it to a funeral home.

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If transportation of the body is required, the following precautions are recommended to be taken:

Precautions during the Handling & Transporting bodies of Marhumeen

The act of moving a recently deceased individual onto a trolley for transportation from the medical facility or deceased home may lead to small amounts of air being expelled from the deceased's lungs and hence present a minor risk of transmitting infection. Therefore, it is imperative that a body bag is used when transferring the body and those handling the body MUST use full personal protective equipment (PPE), supervised by a medical professional. This includes gloves, gowns, surgical masks and eye protection/face shields. PPE should be worn immediately before entering the residence of the deceased; or the room in which the deceased was residing if in a care home or hospital.

After the deceased is placed inside the body bag, the outer surface should be disinfected. Firstly, cleansed with a neutral detergent, then a chlorine-based disinfectant in the form of a solution at a minimum strength of 1,000ppm available chlorine, immediately before leaving the deceased's residence / care home /hospital. This will require at least 2 individuals wearing PPE. Most funeral homes are well equipped with these materials. Volunteers must have access to hand sanitizers at all times during the transportation and handling of the deceased.

The trolley carrying the body must also be disinfected using chlorine solution just before leaving the deceased's residence.

Immediately prior to leaving the deceased's residence, staff members must remove their protective clothing in the manner described below and place all items into a disposable clinical waste bag. This should be disposed of as per guidance from the country regulations, or incinerated in a suitable clinical incineration facility, or in areas where these facilities may not be available, be suitably burnt.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Please note that respirator/face mask requirements will vary according to the country's specific guidance.

- Long sleeved, fluid-repellent disposable gown
- Gloves with long tight-fitting cuffs
- Face mask
- Eye protection, such as single use full-face visors or goggles must be worn (prescription glasses do not provide adequate protection)

The PPE described above must be worn at all times when in the environment of the deceased.

Gloves must be changed when moving from a dirty to a clean task (e.g. after cleaning body fluids/spillage). Remove glove, (see removing PPE instructions), decontaminate hands with alcohol hand sanitizer, put on a pair of clean gloves, ensuring that the cuffs of the gloves cover the cuffs of the gown.

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The soil used for Ttayamum must also be adequately discarded with the PPE as per clinical waste guidelines and should NOT be reused.

Hand hygiene

This is essential before and after all patient contact, removal of protective clothing and decontamination of the environment. Use soap and water to wash hands or an alcohol hand rub if hands are visibly clean.

Rings, wrist watches and wrist jewelry must not be worn by volunteers.

Putting on and removing PPE for confirmed/suspected COVID-19 cases

Use safe work practices to protect yourself and limit the spread of infection:

- Keep hands away from face and PPE being worn
- Change gloves when torn or heavily contaminated
- Limit surfaces touched in the patient environment
- Regularly perform hand hygiene (in between or after glove change/removal)
- Always clean hands after removing gloves

Pre-wearing instructions:

- Ensure Volunteer are hydrated (as unable to drink/eat during the process)
- Tie hair back
- Remove jewelry
- Check PPE in the correct size is available

Putting on PPE

The order for putting on is; gown, respirator, eye protection and gloves. This is to be undertaken outside the funeral home facility.

Perform hand hygiene before putting on PPE

- Put on the long-sleeved fluid repellent disposable gown, fasten neckties and waist ties
- Face Mask: Position the upper straps on the crown of your head, above the ears and the lower strap at the nape of the neck. Ensure that the respirator is flat against your cheeks. With both hands mould the nose piece from the bridge of the nose firmly pressing down both sides of the nose with your fingers until you have a good facial fit.
- Eye protection: place over face and eyes and adjust the headband to fit.
- Gloves: select according to hand size. Ensure cuff of gown covered is covered by the cuff of the glove
- Please refer to video that demonstrates putting on and taking off PPE - [Video 1](#) and [Video 2](#)

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Removal of PPE

PPE should be removed in an order that minimizes the potential for cross contamination. PPE is to be removed in a systematic way before leaving the ghusl facility such as gloves, then gown and then eye protection

The respirator must always be removed outside the ghusl facility, and placed in the appropriate disposal bag immediately

Where possible the process should be undertaken at a distance of 2 meters to reduce the risk of inadvertently contaminating colleagues while removing PPE.

All PPE must be disposed of as infectious clinical waste. The order of removal of PPE is as follows:

Gloves: the outsides of the gloves are contaminated

- grasp the outside of the glove with the opposite gloved hand; peel off
- hold the removed glove in gloved hand
- slide the fingers of the un-gloved hand under the remaining glove at the wrist
- peel the remaining glove off over the first glove and discard
- clean hands with alcohol hand rub

Gown: the front of the gown and sleeves will be contaminated

- unfasten neck then waist ties
- pull gown away from the neck and shoulders, touching the inside of the gown only using a peeling motion as the outside of the gown will be contaminated.
- turn the gown inside out, fold or roll slowly into a bundle and discard into a lined waste bin

Eye protection (preferably a full-face visor): the outside will be contaminated

- to remove, use both hands to handle the retraining straps by pulling away from behind and discard
- clean hands with alcohol hand rub

Respirator:

- do not touch the front of the respirator as it will be contaminated
- lean forward slightly
- reach to the back of the head with both hands to find the bottom retaining strap and bring it to the top strap
- lift straps over the top of the head
- let the respirator fall away from your face and place in bin
- wash hands with soap and water
- Please refer to video that demonstrates putting on and taking off PPE: [Video 1](#) and [Video 2](#)

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Criteria for Volunteers in handling deceased body of a confirmed or highly suspected case of Covid-19:

To avoid potential risks of infection in case of inadvertent transmission during the ablution and shrouding process volunteers should be:

- Under the age of 60 with no acute or underlying medical conditions.
- Not have any current symptoms of fever, cough, muscular pains, diarrhea and or vomiting.
- Not returned from any high-risk areas in the preceding 14 days.
- Have received training & be confident in the use of PPE and the correct wearing & removing of PPE as well as disposal of these and other forms of clinical waste.
- We highly recommend that at least one member of the ablution and shrouding team to be a healthcare professional and be present, in order to supervise infection control measures, and to guide teams in general.
- Be aware that they may need to self-quarantine if any breach of PPE occurs during the ablution and shrouding process
- g) Volunteers must monitor themselves for a period of 2 weeks for symptoms (fever, dry cough, shortness of breath) and self-quarantine and contact the appropriate health authorities if they develop any symptoms.

Other General Recommendations

- Only immediate family members and essential volunteers should participate in the burial rites including Salatul Mayyit and attendance at graveyard. After burial the family members should follow the guidance of their local center with respect to further gatherings. At this time, this is not allowed by local government guidance to promote social distancing
- Salatul Mayyit should be preferably performed at the burial ground.
- Families of the deceased will need to be aware that household contacts will be under self-isolation measures as they are regarded as direct contacts of the deceased.
- Families should NOT be allowed to participate in the ablution and shrouding of their deceased family member unless they are healthcare professionals with competency in using PPE and adhering to infection control measures.
- The body should be placed in a coffin for the purposes of burial, otherwise, the process of burial in cemetery can be carried out as per regular norms including recitation of Talkeen.

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