

MEDICAL & RELIGIOUS GUIDELINES ON THE TRANSPORT & HANDLING OF DEAD BODIES (MAYYIT) INFECTED WITH COVID-19

Last updated: 22nd April 2020

UPDATED GUIDELINE

We have received new instructions on performing Ghusl and Tayammum on the mayyit. The latest set of answers received from Agha's office in Najaf:

Q&A

which provides further clarity to the ongoing and developing guidelines

There continues to remain diverse opinion amongst the health care experts on the nature of COVID-19 disease. Because of this many of our members feel anxiety, fear and uncertainty.



Therefore, the World-Federation COVID-19 Task Force: continues to seek guidance from His Eminence Sayyid al Sistani's (may Allah SWT give him a long and healthy life) offices as well as reviewing the guidelines released by medical authorities worldwide.



The World Federation COVID-19 Task Force recommends that each Jamaat/community puts in a risk assessment process to help the Guardian of the deceased to choose one of the options below when faced with a deceased body with confirmed or highly suspected COVID-19 infection

According to His Eminence Sayyid al Sistani (DZ), the primary responsibility of the burial rights lies with the Vali (the deceased's guardian) or anyone he/she designates to assist him/her (typically the jamat within our community set-up). **We therefore urge the local Jamaat's Ghusl & Kafan Committee (GKC) to support the Guardian of the deceased to:**

- Consult extensively with local health authorities and medical professionals to ensure proper self-protection steps are taken to minimise the risk of personal and community transmission.
- Include in your GKC trained medical professionals and learned scholars to set-up processes that works best for your local conditions.
- Consult with reputable Islamic scholars with deep understanding of fiqhi laws to guide the ghusl team as to what are the mustahab acts which can be skipped & what and how wajib acts can be reduced to the minimum or done more safely
- Appreciate the availability and capacity of resources of the organization to implement stringent infection control practices to minimize risk of personal and community wide spread of infection as negligence in safe practice can lead to Shari'y culpability & liabilities



We emphasize that these are guidelines (not rules and regulations) based on our current understanding of the disease and the religious implications. These guidelines may change with new information received. In the entire decision-making process, all involved must assume responsibility and accountability of the actions taken.



SUMMARY SHEET: OPTIONS IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE FOR ALL COVID-19 (OR HIGHLY SUSPECTED) RELATED DEATHS

*For options 1 - 4 outlined below they should **only** be considered if the GKC is confident that all legal and infection control precautions pre and post burial can be upheld*



OPTION 1 – GHUSL

If medical experts and/or Govt health authority permit and IF ALL MANDATORY requirements of PPE gear and risk assessment measures highlighted are implemented then **Ghusl is wajib**.

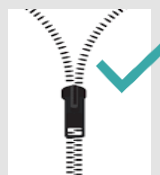
We strongly recommend that if legal requirements preclude the possibility of ghusl, or if ghusl cannot be performed safely (e.g. insufficient PPE, training etc.), then please move to other options outlined below



OPTION 2 – TAYAMMUM WITH MINIMAL OPENING OF THE BODY BAG

If medical experts and/or Govt health authority allow only minimal/essential opening of the body bag, then perform Tayammum. Kafan can then be wrapped on top of the body bag (preferably, shrouded mayyit be placed in a coffin). Hanoot can be confined to 3 body parts (forehead and 2 hands) if experts & authorities do not advise/allow camphor application to all 7 sajda parts.

We strongly recommend that if legal requirements preclude the possibility of tayammum with opening the body bag, or if this cannot be performed safely (e.g. insufficient PPE, training etc.), then please move to other options outlined below.



OPTION 3 – TAYAMMUM ON TOP OF THE BODY BAG

If medical experts and/or Govt health authority do not allow even the minimal opening of the body bag, then perform Tayammum on top of the body bag. The tayammum parts of the mayyit (forehead, temples, 2 hands wrist downwards) should be discerned by sight, touch or even pressing the body bag to delineate the minimum area for the Wajib tayammum wiping. If despite reasonable efforts the tayammum area on the mayyit's covered body cannot be determined at all, only then tayammum no longer remains obligatory, but should still be attempted to the extent possible. Kafan can then be wrapped on top of the body bag (preferably, shrouded mayyit be placed in a coffin).



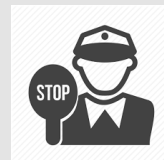
OPTION 4 – NO GHUSL/TAYAMMUM BUT KAFAN IS POSSIBLE

If medical experts and/or Govt health authority do not allow Tayammum to be administered on the body bag then Tayammum is not obligatory. Kafan should be given on top of the body bag (preferably, shrouded mayyit be placed in a coffin).



OPTION 5 – NO GHUSL/TAYAMMUM/KAFAN

This option should be only taken if the individual or The GKC is NOT confident that their Centre or community has the necessary precautions or expertise to manage all the infection control precautions and there are no other alternative venues (e.g. a funeral home) where such measures can be taken. It would remain the last option especially where the law of the city or country prohibits the community/Centre of opening a body bag or even bringing it to the Centre or an alternative venue (e.g a funeral home)



PRACTICAL SAFETY MEASURES

PROPOSED ACTIONS FOR FEDERATIONS AND JAMATS:

- We recommend that each of our Centres (Jamaat) with the support of the Regional Federations put infection control measures (including PPE handling and buddying system) and volunteer training in place.
- In the event of numbers of deaths increasing significantly, member jamaats are encouraged to collaborate with neighbouring Shia Ithna'asheri organisations to ensure that all Muslims can be offered a burial according to Islamic rites. Jamaats need to draw up contingency plans to account for emergency scenarios.



1. HANDLING BODIES OF MARHUMEEN

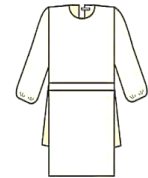
- Please refer to your local health authority guidance on the infection control measures that are required for transporting and handling the body of the deceased.
- It is preferable that the ghusl/kafan facility should be a well ventilated room.



2. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Please note that respirator/face mask requirements will vary according to the host 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 (note prescription glasses do not provide adequate protection)



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

2.1 HAND HYGIENE

This is essential before and after all contact with the deceased, 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.



2.2 PRE-WEARING INSTRUCTIONS:

- Ensure ghusl/kafan volunteer hydrated (as unable to drink/eat during the process)
- Tie hair back
- Remove jewellery
- Check PPE in the correct size is available

2.3 PUTTING ON & REMOVAL OF PPE

- The order for putting on is gown, respirator, eye protection and gloves. This is to be undertaken outside the ghusl facility.
- PPE should be removed in an order that minimises 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 face mask 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 metres to reduce the risk of the inadvertently contaminating colleagues while doffing. Please refer to the below document for the correct process of putting on & removing PPE.
- We recommend this guideline: Best Practice: Appendix 6 - Putting on and removing PPE

<http://www.nipcm.hps.scot.nhs.uk/media/1408/nipcm-appendix6-20180712.pdf>

3. CLEANING OF GHUSL/KAFAN FACILITIES & WASTE DISPOSAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are general guidelines for cleaning and waste disposal following the Ghusl/Kafan of a deceased with confirmed or suspected COVID-19.

- Keep ventilation systems active while cleaning is conducted.
- Wear disposable gloves. Dispose of gloves if they become damaged or soiled and when cleaning is completed. **Never wash or reuse gloves.**
- Use eye protection, such as a faceshield or goggles.
- Use respiratory protection.
- Wear a clean, long-sleeved fluid-resistant gown to protect skin and clothing.
- Use disinfectants with label claims against human coronaviruses.
- Clean the surface first, and then apply the disinfectant.
- Avoid using product application methods that cause splashing or generate aerosols.
- Follow standard operating procedures for the containment and disposal of used PPE and regulated medical waste.
- When cleaning is complete and PPE has been removed, wash hands immediately with soap and water for 20 seconds. Ensure that hand hygiene facilities are readily available at the point of use (e.g., at or adjacent to the PPE removal area)

4. CRITERIA FOR GHUSL/TAYAMMUM/KAFAN 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 Ghusl/Kafan process volunteers should be:

- Under the age of 65 with no underlying major medical conditions.
- Have received training & be confident in the use of PPE as well as disposal of these and other forms of clinical waste.
- Be aware that they may need to self-quarantine if any breach of PPE occurs during the Tayammum/Kafan process
- 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 develop any symptoms.

5. OTHER GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ghusl/Tayammum/Kafan be carried out by a minimum number of individuals (maximum of 4).
- Numbers attending the burial should be kept to an absolute minimum and must be in accordance with local legislation.
- Salatul Mayyit should be performed at the Cemetery. Please refer to the Q&A document for more Shar'ii information Salatul Mayyit [Q&A](#).
- Family members should NOT be allowed to participate in the Ghusl/Kafan of the deceased unless they are already part of the GKC or are a health care professional with competency in using PPE and adhering to infection control measures
- Where possible, we recommended the body be placed in a coffin for burial, otherwise, the process of burial in cemetery can be carried out as per regular norms including recitation of Talkeen.

APPENDIX: REFERENCES

WHO guidance

https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331538/WHO-COVID-19-IPC_DBMgmt-2020.1-eng.pdf

Australia

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/covid-19-funeral-directors.aspx>

Canada

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/interim-guidance-acute-healthcare-settings.html#a4.17>

Europe

<https://www.effs.eu/>

<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/COVID-19-safe-handling-of-bodies-or-persons-dying-from-COVID19.pdf>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased/guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased-with-suspected-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19>

National Association of Funeral Director's (UK)

https://members.nafd.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NAFD_Pandemic_Planning_Doc_EXTERNAL-USE.pdf

BIMA Guidelines (UK)

<https://io.wp.com/mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/BIMA-Ghusl-guidelines-QA-1.png?ssl=1>

NBC: Ghusl Pathway 30th Mar 2020 (UK)

<https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Ghusl-Pathway-March-30.pdf>

NBC: Body Handling Procedure 7th Apr 2020 (UK)

<https://mcb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/NBC-Body-Handling-Procedure-April-7.pdf>

Public Health England (UK)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased/guidance-for-care-of-the-deceased-with-suspected-or-confirmed-coronavirus-covid-19>

Royal college of pathologist's guidance

<https://www.rcpath.org/uploads/assets/0b7d77fa-b385-4c60-b47dde930477494b/G200-TBPs-Guidance-for-care-of-deceased-during-COVID-19-pandemic.pdf>

NHS: Scotland Best Practice - Appendix 6 - Putting on and removing PPE

<http://www.nipcm.hps.scot.nhs.uk/media/1408/nipcm-appendix6-20180712.pdf>

Ireland

<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/funeraldirectorsguidance/funeralserviceforpersonwithconfirmedcovid-19infection/>

US

Vermont

<https://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/HAN-COVID19-Death-Certification-and-Disposition-10March-2020.pdf>

Ontario

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/funeral_bereavement_guidance.pdf

Hong Kong

https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/grp-guideline-hp-ic-precautions_for_handling_and_disposal_of_dead_bodies_en.pdf

India

https://www.chp.gov.hk/files/pdf/grp-guideline-hp-ic-precautions_for_handling_and_disposal_of_dead_bodies_en.pdf

https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/1584423700568_COVID19GuidelinesonDeadbodymanagement.pdf

Iran

<https://www.hawzahnews.com/news/890904/%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%AA-%DA%A9%D8%B1%D9%88%D9%86%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C-%D8%AF%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%87%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B2-%DA%86%DA%AF%D9%88%D9%86%D9%87-%D8%BA%D8%B3%D9%84-%D9%88-%D8%AE%D8%A7%DA%A9-%D8%B3%D9%BE%D8%A7%D8%B1%DB%8C-%D9%85%DB%8C-%D8%B4%D9%88%D9%86%D8%AF> (Farsi)

Pakistan

A Public Service Message from IMI & Health Board KPSIAJ: COVID19 guidance for Ghusl, Kafn and Dafn for the Mayyit (Urdu)

Kenya

http://kam.co.ke/kam/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/FAQS-for-BUSINESS-OPERATIONS_8-April-2020.pdf.pdf.pdf

<http://khf.co.ke/final-moh-guidelines-for-disposal-of-covid-19-human-remains-pdf/>

JAFFERY ISLAMIC CENTRE: MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT QUARANTINE AND ISOLATION, DR. S.K. SHARIF

Articles

<https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2020/04/07/828317535/coronavirus-is-changing-the-rituals-of-death-for-many-religions?t=158724775913>

<https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20200317-covid-19-how-long-does-the-coronavirus-last-on-surfaces>

<https://nationalpost.com/news/world/covid-19-new-thailand-study-indicates-coronavirus-can-jump-from-the-dead-to-the-living>