



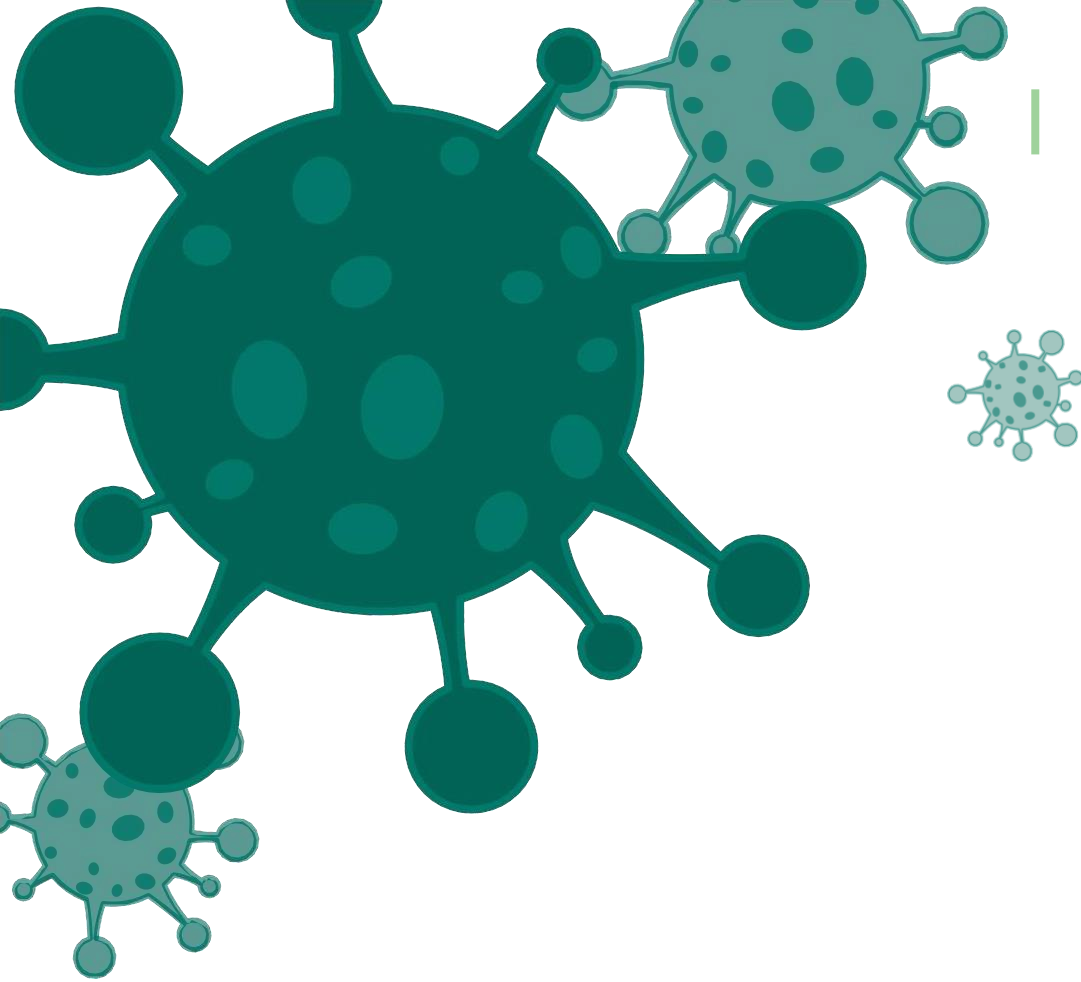
TOURISM COUNCIL OF BHUTAN

TOURISM SERVICES UNDER THE NEW NORMAL

OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES | APRIL 2022

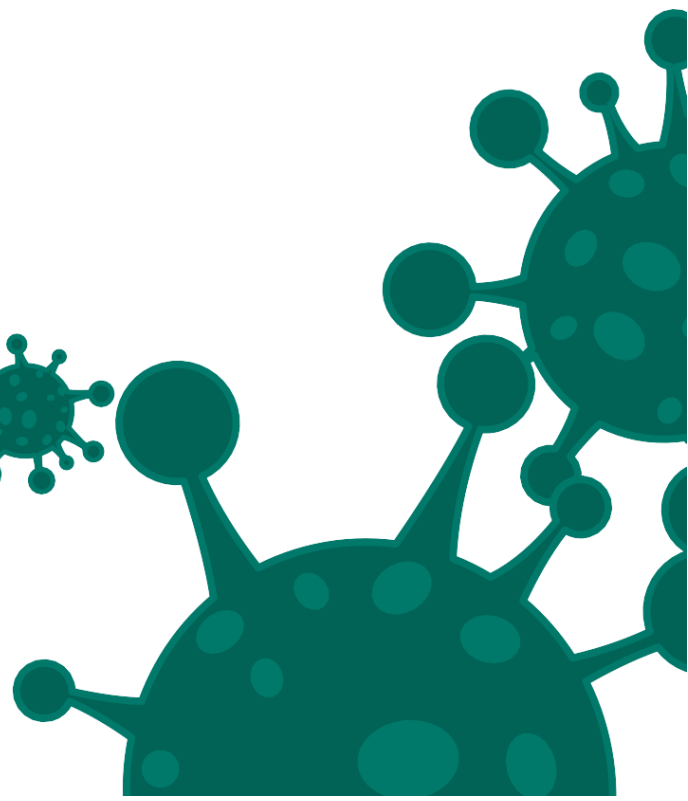
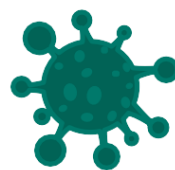
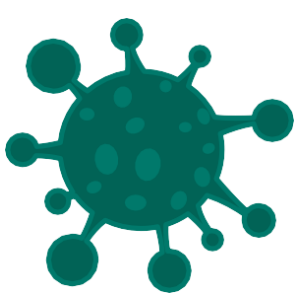
*TRAINING FOR TOUR OPERATORS, TOUR GUIDES
AND
ACCOMMODATION PROVIDERS*





Disclaimer:

This document provides operational guidelines on tourism services under the new normal and the minimum requirements to help ensure safety and confidence for conducting tourism businesses and activities amid COVID-19 pandemic. However, the standards and protocols may change overtime as the nature of the pandemic evolves. As such, it is important for all parties to keep updated with the latest standards and protocols.



INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented challenges and impacts across the globe with tourism being one of the severely impacted sectors. Travel restrictions were introduced after the detection of the first imported positive case on March 5, 2020 in the country. COVID-19 safety measures and protocols were implemented for the general public as well as for incoming individuals (Bhutanese and foreigners) with mandatory quarantine and testing requirements. However, with the successful vaccination of more than 95% of eligible population, and with the first tourist visiting the country on August 9, 2021, Bhutan is gearing towards new normal tourism.

This document provides details on new normal tourism, the entry procedure, operational guidelines for tourism service providers for facilitating tourist visitations under COVID-19 protocol. Among others, the following are the objectives of the document:

1. To carry out tourism activities in compliance with health and safety protocols;
2. To guide and prepare tourism service providers for the new normal tourism in concurrence to health and safety protocols; and
3. Create awareness and disseminate relevant information on new normal tourism under existing COVID-19 protocol.



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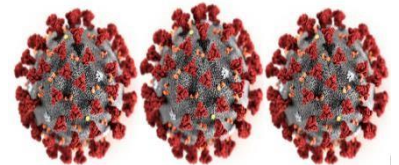
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SECTION I

GENERAL COVID-19 INFORMATION

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is the disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2. It was first learnt by the WHO towards the end of December 2019 following a report of a cluster of cases of 'viral pneumonia' in Wuhan, People's Republic of China. It involves the nose, throat and lungs.



Signs and symptoms of COVID-19

Most people infected with the virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness. Some will become seriously ill. Older people and those with underlying medical conditions are more likely to develop serious illness.

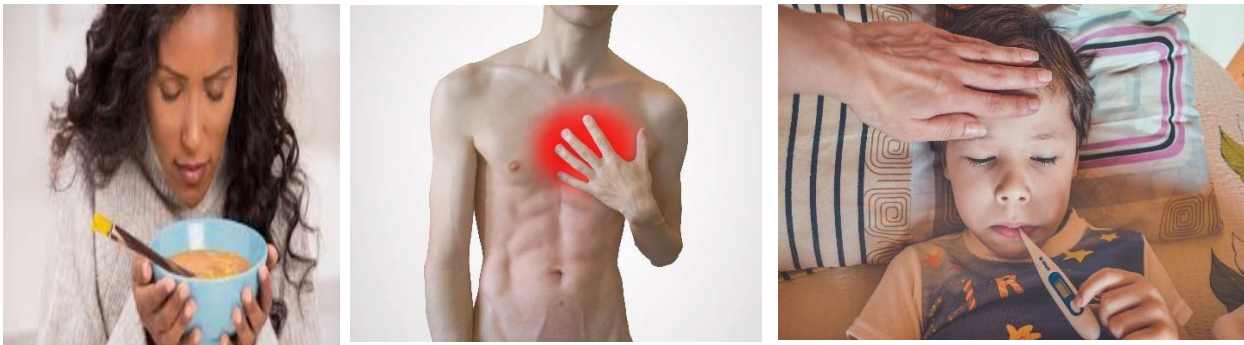
The most common symptoms include dry cough, fever and fatigue.



Besides this, less common symptoms include loss of taste or smell, sore throat, headache, muscular or joint pain, nausea and diarrhea, dizziness, etc.



The severe symptoms include shortness of breath, loss of appetite, chest pain and high fever. In the long run, more severe symptoms involving neurological complications such as strokes and brain inflammations are experienced.



Risk for COVID-19 infection

Generally, everyone is at risk and can be severely ill or die from COVID-19 at any age. However, elderly people aged 60 and above and people with underlying health conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes, lung/heart problems, cancer, etc. are at most risk from COVID-19.

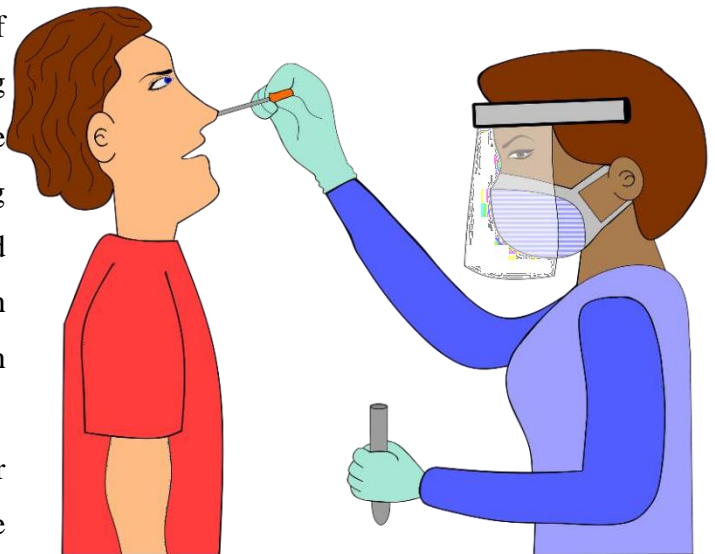


Requirement for tests and medical attention

About 80% of those who develop symptoms of COVID-19 recover from the disease without having to visit hospital for treatment. About 15% become seriously ill and require oxygen or other breathing aids. About 5 % enter into critical conditions and need intensive care. In case of severe symptoms such as high fever and/or cough associated with shortness of

breath, chest pain or pressure, or loss of speech or movement, one should seek medical care

immediately. However, one should get tested whether or not he/she has COVID-19 symptoms. Generally, it takes about 5-6 days from the time of exposure to COVID-19 for the symptoms to be visible. However, the symptoms can begin anywhere from 1-14 days after the exposure time. This is why people who have been exposed to or suspected to have been exposed to the virus are advised to remain at home and stay away from others for 14 days. Thus, there is possibility for transmission of the disease from an asymptomatic person. That is why health authorities around the world recommend public to take basic precautions at all times such as wearing face mask, washing/sanitizing hands, avoiding crowds/gatherings, observing cough etiquettes, etc. and to stay in quarantine if one has been in contact with infected people.



Mode of transmission

The COVID -19 can spread from person to person through following two basic ways:

- Droplets transmission, and
- Contact transmission

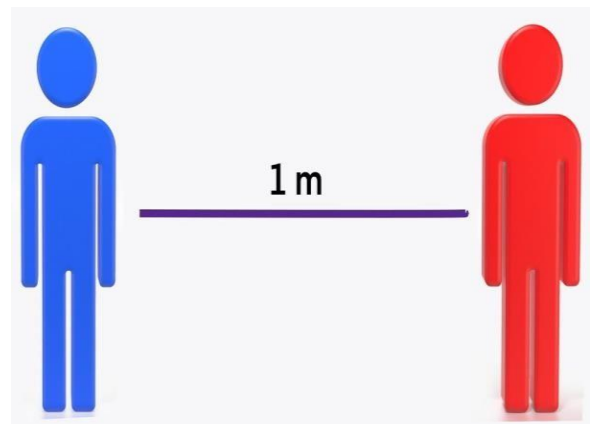


The COVID-19 is transmitted through respiratory droplets. It is also possible to get infected if one comes in close contact with an infected person, or comes in contact with the objects that have been in contact with the infected person. Researchers around the world have shown that the virus can persist on surfaces outside human body for few hours or up to several days depending on the nature of the surface. Some studies have also suggested that the virus is transmitted through aerosols especially in closed and inadequately ventilated rooms where infected people spend long time interacting with others. Therefore, it is recommended to observe all the basic precautions and stay in quarantine if one is infected or has been in close contact with an infected person to prevent transmission of the disease.

Prevention of COVID-19 transmission

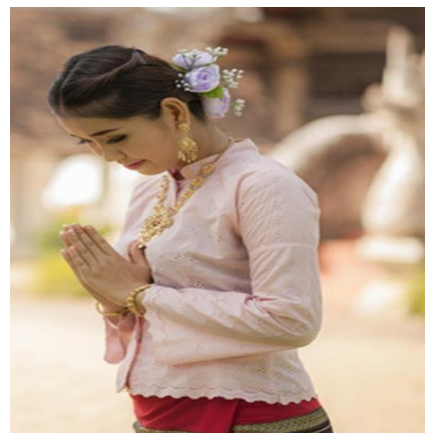
Physical practices

- Avoid social gathering, crowd and close contact
- Keep physical distancing of minimum 1 meter (3 feet) apart



Greeting etiquette

- Avoid handshake
- Follow traditional/no-touch methods



Proper Cough & Sneeze Etiquette



Spit

Avoid spitting of saliva, snort and sputum in the open space.



Personal waste

- Throw face mask, and other contaminated items in a lined container/bin with lid
- Dispose the bin properly

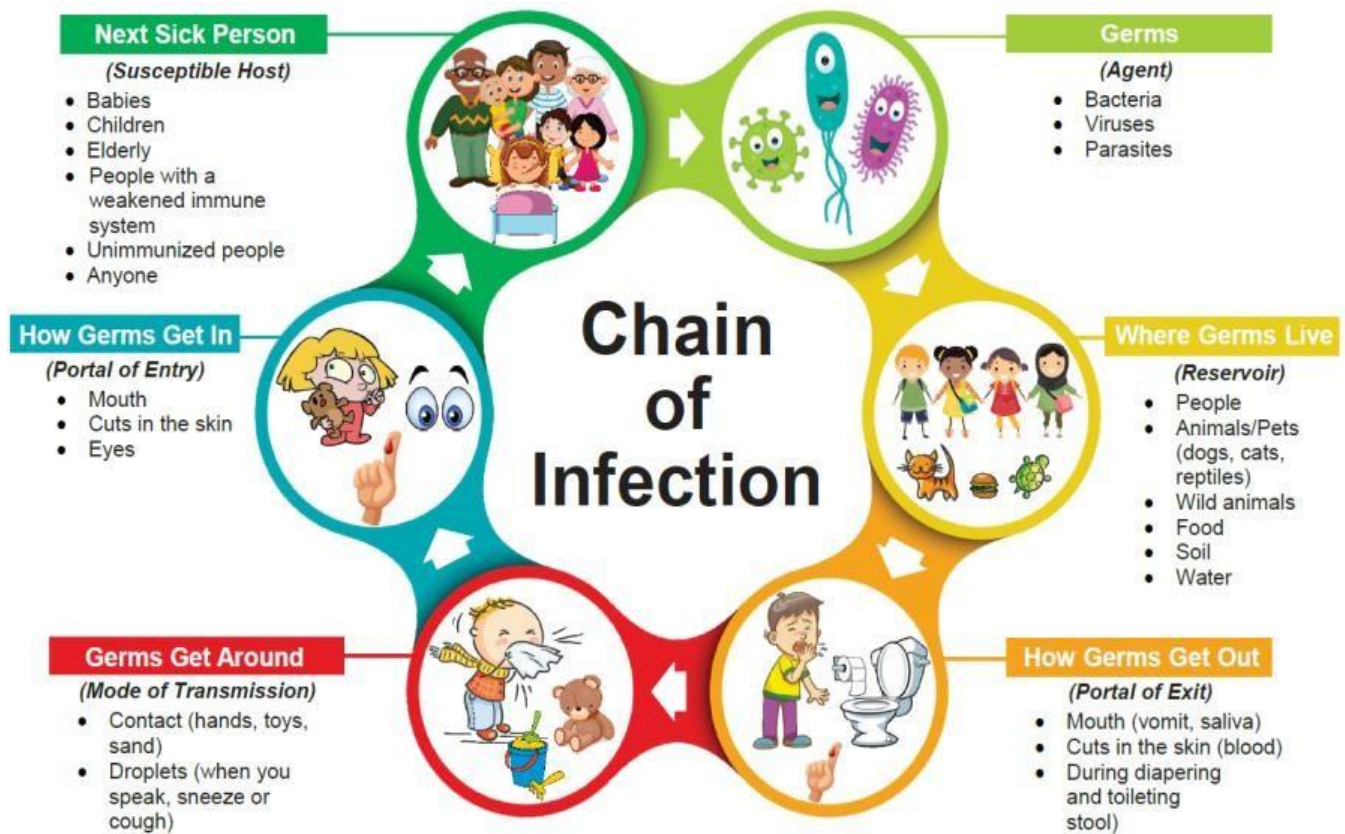


Important sources of information on COVID-19

1. Ministry of Health (MoH), Bhutan- <http://www.moh.gov.bt/> or <https://www.facebook.com/MoHBhutan/>
2. COVID-19 Government Portal, Bhutan- <https://www.gov.bt/covid19/>
3. Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Bhutan- <https://www.pmo.gov.bt/> or <https://www.facebook.com/PMOBhutan/>
4. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), Bhutan- <https://www.mfa.gov.bt/> or <https://www.facebook.com/MoFABhutan/>
5. World Health Organization (WHO)- <https://www.who.int/>

Infection control

Chain of Infection transmission



Precautions to prevent infection

The precautions to prevent COVID-19 infection are categorized into the following:

1. Contact precautions
2. Droplet precautions

Contact precaution

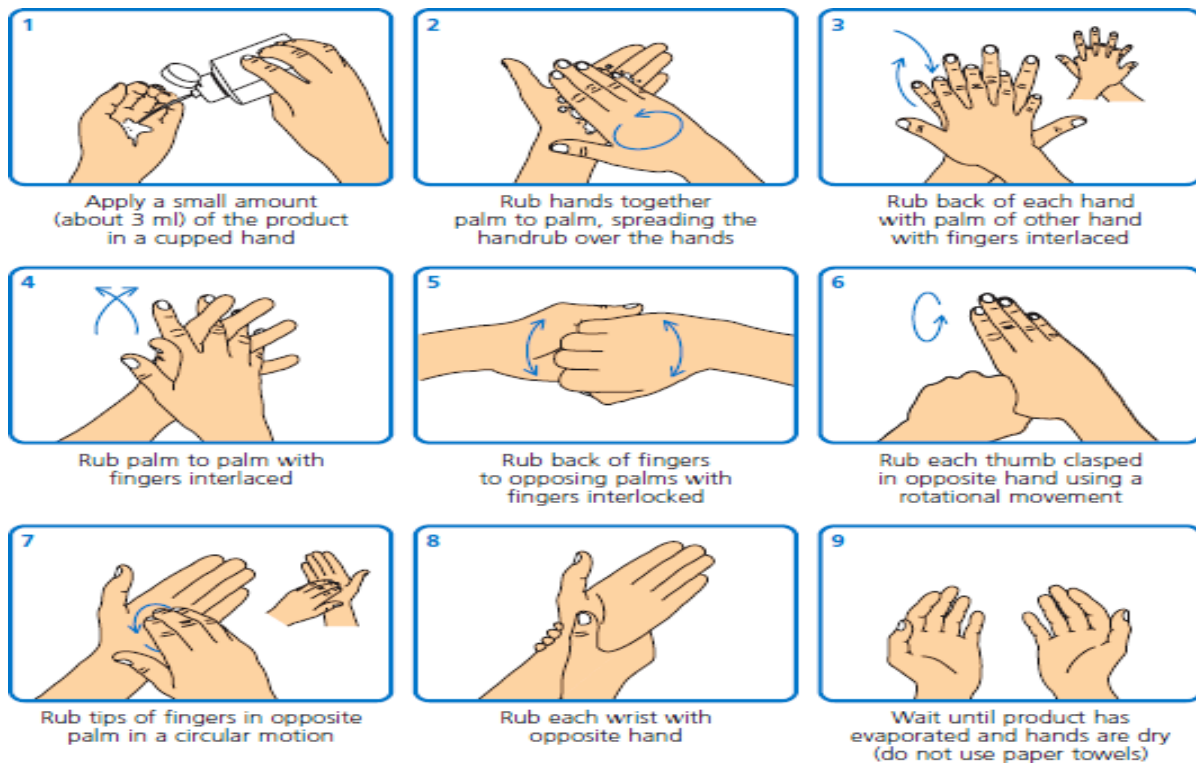
The contact precaution consists of the following:

1. Perform Hand hygiene/Washing
2. Wear mask
3. Wear gloves
4. Use a Face Shield
5. Shoe Covers May Be Necessary
6. Report Any Possible Exposure Immediately

Hand Hygiene/Hand Washing

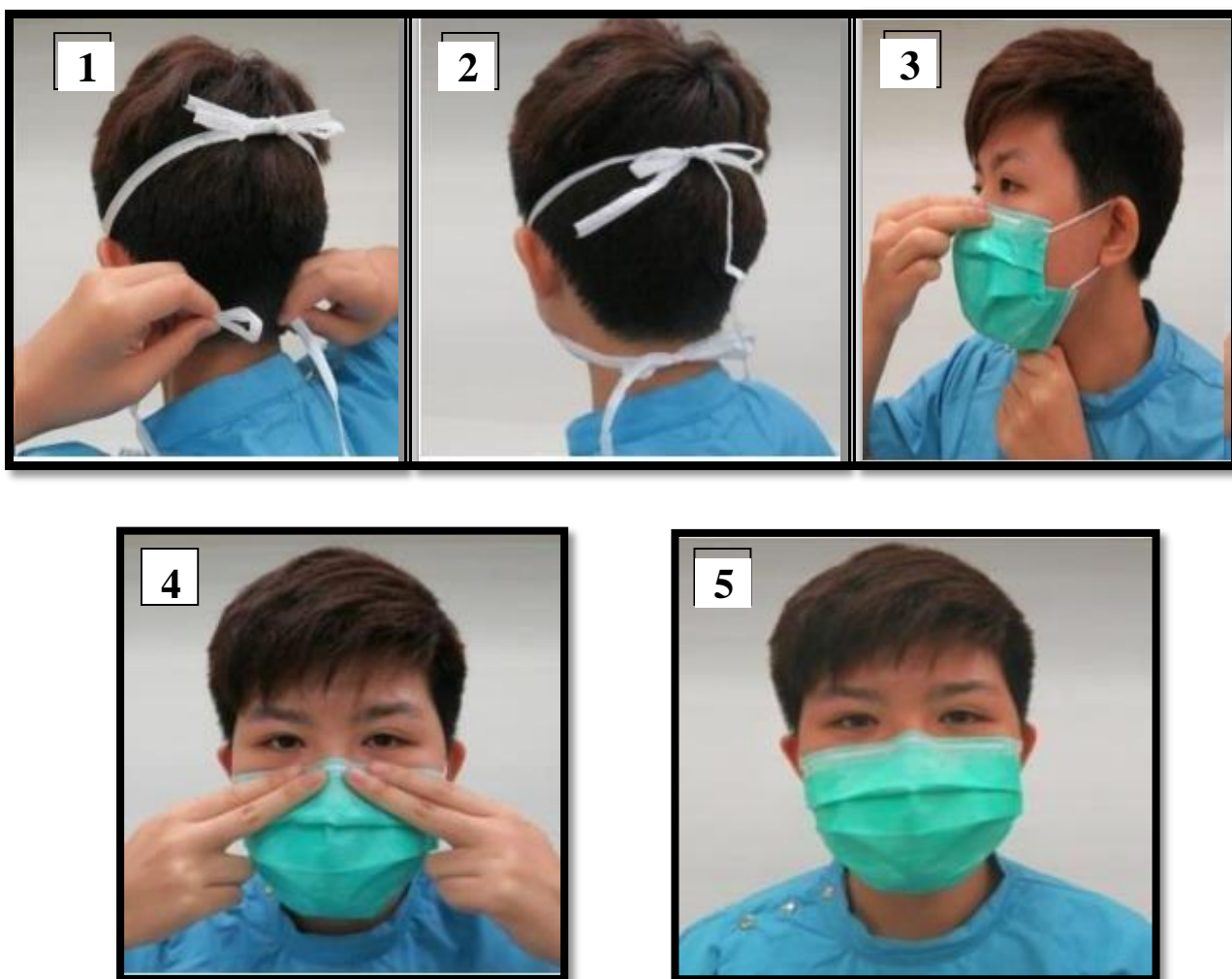
1. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
2. use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with minimum of 60% alcohol
3. A minimum of 3 ml of hand sanitizer should be used in each session
4. Soap and water are the best option if hands are visibly dirty.
5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
6. Remove all ornaments
7. Keep nails short

7 Steps of hand washing (Soap and water/ Sanitizer)



Basic Personal protective equipmentSteps to wear a face mask





Gloves

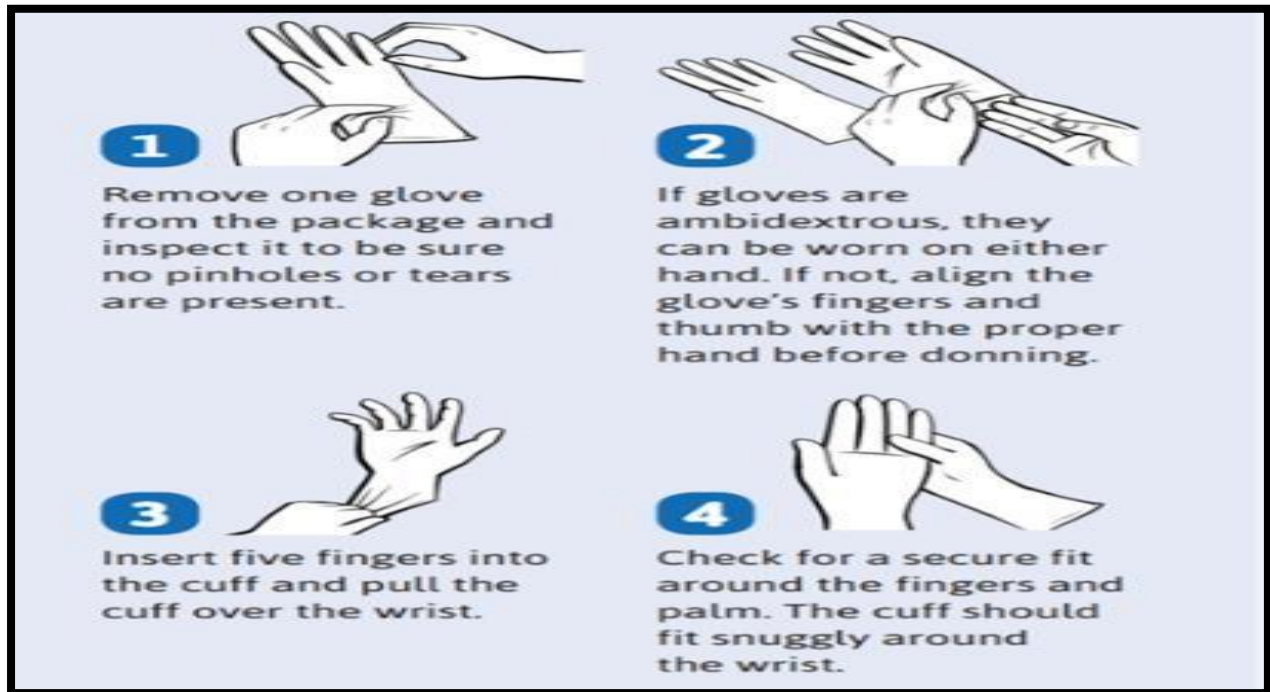
When to use gloves?

1. If you are handling infectious and contaminated waste
2. When cleaning and serving meals
3. When handling luggage

Note:

- ✓ Hand washing is very important (before and after) using gloves
- ✓ Can use hand sanitizer with gloves if they are contaminated

Wearing/ putting on the gloves



Removing the gloves



Monitoring Body Temperature and Oxygen level

What is body temperature?

- The degree of heat maintained by the body
- OR
- It is the balance between the heat produced and the heat lost in the body

Devices used to check the body temperature



Body temperature range

The body temperature may vary between 97°F to 99°F or 36.1°C to 37.2°C

Normal Body temperature

Oral Temperature	Rectal Temperature	Axillary Temperature
98.6°F (37°C)	99.6°F (37.5°C)	97.6°F (36.4°C)

Forehead	35.8°C– 37.8°C
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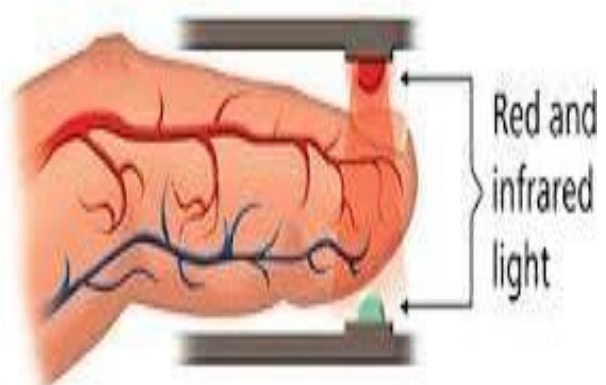
Temperature Reading



Oxygen Level

- ✓ Normal= SpO2 of 90% and more
- ✓ Hypoxemia=SpO2 below 90%

Pulse oximeter



Some relevant videos

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6x_Lfjxa3Y

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWA6Gwx8fls>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yuuUrIl2qM8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmSi5BxgTpA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHm-zSCURvY>

SECTION II:

ENTRY PROCEDURE AND OTHER PROTOCOLS



CHAPTER 1: ENTRY INTO THE COUNTRY

Tour booking

1. Tourists must contact a licensed Bhutanese tour operator to arrange their tour to Bhutan. The list of licensed tour operators are provided at: www.bhutan.travel/tour-operators
2. Tourists must undergo 5 days quarantine irrespective of vaccination status and recovered status. (However the quarantine duration may change depending on the guidance of NC-19TF)
3. Tourists are requested to discuss the cancellation & refund policies with the tour operator prior to travel.

Visa application procedure for MDPR paying tourists

1. Bhutanese tour operators will apply for a visa on behalf of the tourist to Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB).
2. Tourists will be required to obtain an online visa before arrival.
3. Visa fee of USD 40 will be applicable.
4. The following are mandatory for processing visa:
 - a. Applications as well as extensions thereof to be channeled through Tashel Online system.
 - b. Application forms to be complete in all respects and incomplete application will be rejected.
 - c. Applications endorsed by TCB will be approved by the Department of Immigration (DoI). However, the Bhutanese tour operators should get prior approval for the detailed travel itinerary from relevant authorities and agencies.
 - d. Fees will be collected along with tour payments.
5. Visa will be endorsed on a case by case basis.
6. Tourists need to pay other fees and charges.
7. Bhutanese tour operators will process other required permits.

E-permit application procedure for non-MDPR paying tourists



1. A Bhutanese tour operator will apply for e-permit on behalf of the tourist to TCB.
2. All tourists will be required to obtain an online e-permit before arrival.
3. The following are mandatory for processing e-permit:
 - a. Applications as well as extensions thereof to be channeled through Tashel Online system.
 - b. Application forms to be complete in all respects and any incomplete application will be rejected.
 - c. Applications endorsed by TCB will be approved by the Department of Immigration.
4. E-permit will be endorsed on case by case basis.
5. Tourists need to pay other fees and charges.
6. Bhutanese tour operators will process other required permits.



Airline requirement

1. Any airline operating flights to Bhutan will check tourists for valid visas before departure for allowing them to board the flight.
2. All flights operating to Bhutan are required to consult Aviation Authority on the health protocols that need to be adhered to.

Health authority requirements

1. All tourists undergo a RT-PCR test on Day 1 and Day 5 of quarantine period.
2. All tourists with signs and symptoms must undergo a RT-PCR test during tour.

CHAPTER 2: PROCEDURE AT THE AIRPORT



Airport arrival

1. All tourists follow COVID-19 protocols at the airport.
2. All tourists/airport staff should maintain physical distance of at least 1 meter at all times.
3. All tourists to undergo temperature screening through thermal scanners and if anyone with signs and symptoms to undergo RT-PCR test.
4. Disinfecting procedures to be in place for all arrivals, luggage and travel documents.
5. All tourists follow additional requirements recommended by airport authorities.

Airport Transfer

1. Government will arrange designated escort vehicles for tourists to transfer individuals from airport to facility quarantine (Clean and Safe Plus facility)
2. Identify designated parking for the airport transfer vehicles at the airport.

CHAPTER 3: ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES



Tourist standard quarantine (Clean and Safe Plus) facility

1. Hoteliers/accommodation providers used as quarantine facility for tourist are required to follow the latest SOP for "Clean and Safe Plus" (tourist quarantine) facility and Guidance and SOP on Quarantine for COVID-19.
2. Tourist/Tour Operator can book a hotel for quarantine purpose from the list of hotels certified as "Clean and Safe Plus".
3. Tourist pay for the facility quarantine after negotiation with the accommodation provider. These facility quarantine provides services and facilities equivalent to a normal 3 star hotel.



USE FACE MASK



CLEAN
DISINFECT

&

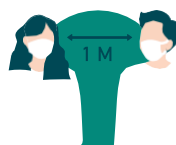


WASH
HANDS
FREQUENTLY

YOUR



AVOID
TOUCHING
EYES, NOSE OR MOUTH



KEEP
DISTANCE
FROM OTHERS

Post-quarantine accommodation

1. Hoteliers/accommodation providers hosting tourists after the mandatory quarantine are required to comply with the SOP for the tourism service providers issued by TCB.

SECTION III

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR TOURISM SERVICE PROVIDER

INTRODUCTION

This standard operating procedure (SOP) is developed to guide the tourism service providers to operate in the "new normal era," when the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic improves. Although adapted from various practices implemented around the world, this document is designed to suit the Bhutanese context.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The main aim of this SOP is to make the residents and visitors feel safe and comfortable while on tour. In addition, the following are the objectives of the SOP:

1. To guide and prepare tourism service providers for the new normal tourism in concurrence to health and safety protocols;
2. To implement "clean and safe" certification of tourism service providers to create safe environment for tourism activities;
3. To raise awareness and build capacity of tourism service providers in health and safety protocols to prevent transmission of COVID-19; and
4. To monitor compliance of tourism service providers with the generic guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures.

SCOPE

This document is intended to be used by the tourism service providers. A tourism service provider interested to host tourists during the "new normal" era must adopt this SOP as an interim measure till the Royal Government of Bhutan advises otherwise.

GENERIC PREVENTIVE MEASURES

These measures include simple health measures that must be followed to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. All tourism stakeholders must strictly follow these measures at all times. The measures areas follows:

- a) **Physical distancing** of at least 1 meter to be followed at all times.
- b) Mandatory use of **face masks** at all times.
- c) Practice frequent **hand washing** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizers.
- d) **Cough etiquettes** need to be followed strictly and this involves strict practice of covering one's mouth and nose while coughing/sneezing.

CHAPTER 1: CLEAN AND SAFE CERTIFICATION

The purpose of "*Clean and Safe*" certification is to enable tourism establishments to demonstrate that they are safe, clean and ready to serve customers and that the employees have been trained on health and safety protocols. The certification will be a mandatory prerequisite for all tourism service providers to open their services to tourists. Tour operator, tour guides and key staff of accommodation providers must attend the training on health and safety protocols. The training can be offered online or face-to-face depending on the situation. For online training, an assessment (test) will be conducted to ensure the service providers read and understood the clean and safe requirements.

GUIDELINES AND CHECKLISTS FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

All the tourism service providers must be trained and certified as "Clean and Safe" in order to provide services. For each service provider, generic guidelines and checklists are developed based on which the assessment shall be carried out. The Tourism Service Providers must meet the minimum requirements of Standard Operating Procedure. The following are the generic guidelines for the tourism service providers:



1. TOUR OPERATOR

General guidelines:

- i. The general preventive measure (physical distancing, facemasks, hand washing/sanitization and coughing etiquettes) must be followed;
- ii. Tour operators must ensure guides and drivers are provided with a list of "do's and don'ts" and thoroughly brief them before each tour;
- iii. The tour guides shall be trained how to recognize COVID-19 symptoms and report any suspected case to the National nearest health center/flu clinic;
- iv. Tour operators should provide list of helplines and arrange recommended basic Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and distribute them to their staff and guests, as and when required;
- v. Tour operators should instruct and ensure that the guides and drivers refrain from close contacts (shaking hands, hugging and offering welcome dhar) during the guest reception;
- vi. Tour operators should use digital technology for sharing information, tour itineraries and make digital payments in order to discourage physical contact;
- vii. The use of Druk Trace app must be mandated while visiting attraction sites, restaurants, hotels, etc;
- viii. Tour operators should contact the attraction sites and arrange timing of visits to avoid overcrowding;
- ix. Regular monitoring must be conducted by the company management and periodic monitoring shall be conducted by sector associations, TCB and relevant authorities.

Checklist

The tour operators must fulfill ALL the requirements given in the checklist below:

Area	Requirements	Remarks (Yes/No)
Office	1. The Tour operator's office must be arranged with proper physical distancing measures and equipped with temperature scanning, QR code and hand sanitizers/hand washing facilities.	
	2. Ensure there is enough basic Personal Protective Equipment (face masks, gloves, and hand gel) for employees and tourists.	
	3. Must maintain a list of emergency contact numbers and provide it to guides and drivers on tour.	
	4. Use digital technology for sharing information, tour itineraries and cashless transactions where possible.	
Tourists	1. Ensure tourists are informed on the pre-entry requirements.	
	2. Communicate and brief tourists on safety and health screening procedures as well as COVID-19 control guidelines in Bhutan.	
	3. Ensure tourists have enough basic PPE	
	4. Ensure the tourists undergo required quarantine period (unless exempted) and take mandatory COVID-19 test during quarantine period, or before the departure as required by the destination country.	
General	1. Brief guides and drivers on "do's and don'ts."	
	2. Provide enough basic PPE to guides and drivers.	
	3. Ensure tourists and guides/drivers use Druk Trace app wherever required.	

2. ACCOMMODATION PROVIDERS

In order for the accommodation providers to cater to tourists, the facility must meet the requirements for Clean and Safe. Star rated hotels including tented accommodations, non-star rated hotels (budget hotels) and Village Homestays (VHS) are the accommodations that can cater to tourists.



2.1 HOTELS

General guidelines:

1. Those hotels which were used as quarantine center must be disinfected and safe for occupancy;
2. Employees should always practice the general preventive measures.
3. Employers should ensure adequate PPEs are provided to all the employees;
4. High touch areas or surfaces must be frequently cleaned/disinfected;
5. Contact relevant toll free number if a guest develops COVID-19 signs and symptoms;
6. The guest rooms must be kept clean and well-ventilated with basic amenities provided;
7. Maintain adequate number of rooms for isolation of guests infected with COVID-19;
8. Restaurant's capacity should be reduced to 80% of the total capacity to ensure safe distancing;
9. Staff must attend the training on COVID-19 safety protocol; and
10. Regular monitoring must be conducted by the company management and periodic monitoring must be conducted by sector association, TCB and relevant authorities.

Checklist

Area	Requirements	Remarks(Yes/No)
Entrance	1. At the entrance, a dedicated safe space should be set up with the following facilities:	
	a. Temperature gun to conduct thermal screening	
	b. Hand washing/sanitizing facilities	
	c. Druk Trace QR code or manual contact tracing registration.	
	2. Staff must wear gloves, facemask and face shields (if necessary).	
	3. Install signage at the entrance to remind guests to follow COVID-19 safety protocols.	
Reception	1. Reception area should have a clear approach path marked for maintaining 1 meter distance.	
	2. Online check-in/out facilities should be in place to avoid physical contact.	
	3. Use of digital payments to discourage physical contact.	
	4. Staff must wear appropriate PPEs.	
	5. Reception desk should have immediately available telephone numbers of health authorities and medical centers.	
	6. Reception counter may provide medical kit containing face mask and alcohol based hand sanitizer.	
Guest Room	1. Rooms should be clean with adequate ventilation.	
	2. Adequate isolation rooms must be identified to transfer guests testing positive for coronavirus.	
	3. Sanitizers or hand washing facilities, garbage and laundry bags should be placed in the room.	
Toilet	1. Toilets should be clean with all functional fittings.	
	2. Toilet must be equipped with soap/shampoo at all times with 24 hours running water (hot and cold).	
	3. Dust bin with disposable garbage bags must be kept at all times.	

Area	Requirements	Remarks(Yes/No)
Kitchen, Restaurants and bar	1. Kitchen, restaurant & bar space should be kept clean and hygiene maintained at all times.	
	2. Safe distancing measures must be put in place to ensure physical distancing.	
	3. Waste segregation and proper disposal of wastes should be practiced.	
	4. Staff in the dining and kitchen must maintain personal hygiene with proper attire and effective hairrestraints.	
Common areas and business center	1. Seating arrangements in all public areas, including the lobby, restaurants, banquets, and the swimming pool area, must be follow social distancing norms.	
	2. Sanitizer dispensers to be made available across public areas for guests	
Staff	1. All staff must be vaccinated and undergo COVID-19 testing as required by the Ministry of Health.	
	2. Staff in key positions must be trained on health and safety protocol, and follow the protocols diligently.	
	3. The hotel must have a designated COVID-19 Safety Focal Staff to monitor the implementation of these SOP on a daily basis to ensure safety measures at the workplace.	

2.2 VILLAGE HOMESTAYS

General guidelines:

1. Facility must be “Clean and Safe” Certified.
2. A family member must undergo training/orientation on health safety protocols.
3. Hand Washing/sanitizing facilities must be in place.
4. Generic prevention must be practiced with Druktrace QR code displayed at the entrance of the house.
5. Undergo COVID-19 test and vaccination, as required by the government regulations.

CHECKLIST

Sl no	Requirements	Remarks (Yes/No)
1	Easily accessible hand washing facilities should be installed at an appropriate location and should be functional and equipped with soap/detergent at all times.	
2	Use Druk Trace QR code or manual registry.	
3	Toilets should be clean with all functional fittings and must be equipped with soap and water available 24hrs.	
4	The family members must wear face masks at all times.	
5	A family member must have undergone training/briefing on health safety protocols.	
6	Family members must undergo required COVID-19 test and vaccination as required by the Ministry of Health.	

3. TOURIST STANDARD RESTAURANT

Guidelines:

All tourist standard restaurants must ensure strict compliance with the COVID-19 protocols when providing their services. Some of the basic guidelines are, but not limited to, as follows:

1. Ensure all COVID-19 protocols are followed by the staff and guests at all times;
2. Staff testing positive for COVID-19 should be relieved from their duty and made to stay at home;
3. Encourage takeaway and food deliveries instead of dine-in options;
4. Disinfect and clean all frequently touched objects;
5. Equipment, containers and utensils should be cleaned thoroughly before and after use;
6. Attend all available trainings and awareness sessions on COVID-19;
7. All cleaning equipment such as cloth, mops and protective gears should be cleaned and disinfected after every use and before using in other areas;
8. All staff should wear proper protective gears while on duty; and
9. Should ensure all arrangements specified in the checklist below are put in place.

CHECKLIST

Sl no	Requirements	Remarks (Yes/No)
1	The entrance areas must have a hand washing station or hand sanitizer.	
2	Use Druk Trace QR code or manual registry.	
3	Kitchen, restaurant & bar space should be kept clean and hygiene maintained at all times.	
4	Restaurant capacity should be reduced to 80% of the total capacity to ensure safe distancing.	
5	Ensure proper ventilation.	
6	Buffet and self-serving services should be offered in strict compliance with the safety measures.	
7	Waste segregation and proper disposal of wastes should be practiced.	
8	Staff in the dining and kitchen must maintain personal hygiene with proper attire and effective hair restraints.	

4. TRANSPORTATION PROVIDERS (DRIVERS)

Guidelines:

Since the transportation providers come directly in contact with guests and must ensure to comply with the following guidelines and "do's and don'ts" developed as per this guideline.

1. The vehicle designated for guests should comply with COVID-19 and RSTA regulations;
2. The generic preventive measures must be strictly followed;
3. Register in Check Post Management System (CPMS) and other systems as per existing regulations;
4. The transportation providers must abide by the "do's and don'ts" as follows:

DO's and DON'TS



Vehicles must follow the seating capacity as per the RSTA regulations.

Always follow the generic preventive measures.

Register on Check Post Management System whenever required.

Visit the hospital if there are signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

Produce COVID-19 negative test certificate and vaccination certificate to the tour operators before assuming duty as per Ministry of Health's requirements.

Drivers must keep vehicle windows open to the extent possible



Don't socialize with the public or community while on duty.

Don't change the driver or vehicle unless in unavoidable circumstances.

Don't come to work if sick or have signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

Don't hug, shake hands or any other body gesture which would violate physical distancing norms

5. TOUR GUIDES

Guidelines:

Guides must play a crucial role in ensuring the safety of both tourists and the public. The followings are some broad guidelines for the guides to follow:

1. Guides should ensure that COVID-19 safety protocols are being followed by the tourists during the tour operations and must ensure that guests are not taken to public places;
2. The guides must accompany the tourists at all times;
3. If a guest shows any signs or symptoms of COVID-19, they should immediately refer to flu clinic;
4. Guides must attend necessary briefing/training on health safety protocols; and
5. Guides must strictly abide by "do's and don'ts" as follows:



Always follow the generic preventive measures and ensure the tourists also do the same.

Take the tourists on tour as per the approved tour itinerary.

Ensure the tourists stay in "clean and safe" certified accommodations only.

Must ensure that guests carry and use basic PPE at all times

Should ensure that tourists have downloaded Druk Trace App and scan the QR codes wherever required.

Visit nearest flu clinic if there are any signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Produce COVID-19

Negative test certificate and vaccination certificate to the tour operators before assuming duty, as required by the national requirements



Don't take tourists to public places restricted by the government.

Don't socialize with the public or community while on duty.

Don't share food from the same plate or water from the same container.

Don't hug, shake hands or any other body gesture which would violate physical distancing norms.

Don't come to work if sick or have signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

6. TOURIST ATTRACTION SITES

Guidelines:

1. The attraction sites must be equipped with hand sanitizers/hand washing facilities and physical distancing barriers;
2. Druk Trace App should be used for all attraction centers;
3. All the visitors must be requested to follow generic preventive measures;
4. Tourist attractions and sites should have crowd management measures in place;
5. Tourist attractions and sites should strictly follow the visitor timing;
6. Tourists must be discouraged from touching “high touch areas” such as prayer wheels, railings, door knobs, etc., and such areas must be cleaned/disinfected regularly; and
7. Periodic monitoring shall be conducted by relevant authorities, LGs, Dzongkhags and Thromdes.

7. HANDICRAFTS

General guidelines:

1. Hand washing facilities/hand sanitizers must be arranged at the entrance of the shop;
2. Druk Trace app or maintain the record of visitors;
3. Encourage customer to use digital payment;
4. Provide pre-packaging of products to decrease physical contact.

The handicraft shops shall be regulated like any other shops and therefore, the certification is not required. However, periodic monitoring shall be conducted by relevant authorities.

8. TREKKING

General guidelines:

1. Trekking must be organized in the designated trek routes.
2. Trekkers must use designated campsites;
3. Guests and staff must follow generic preventive measures;
4. In case of any signs and symptoms, health helpline must be contacted for advice;
5. Guides must advise on COVID-19 safety protocols to other service providers such as horse contractors, porters, cooks, etc;
6. Guides must ensure the trekking team does not mingle with the public, communities and other trekking groups; and
7. Periodic monitoring shall be conducted by relevant authorities.

CHAPTER 2: MONITORING

Monitoring of tourism service providers is important to ensure safety of both the tourists and public. While monitoring, feedback from tourists as well as the service providers must be collected to improve the system. Three levels of monitoring shall be instituted so that tour operations are conducted in a clean, safe and comfortable manner:

INTERNAL MONITORING

The management of the tourism service providers shall conduct regular monitoring, depending on the need. For instance, hotels must conduct daily monitoring of the services while the tour operators can conduct weekly monitoring of guides and drivers. A format for internal monitoring must be developed by the management and a monitoring report must be produced to the relevant authorities during periodic monitoring.

MONITORING BY SECTOR ASSOCIATION

The Sector Association must play an active role in monitoring the establishments under them. This would not only help in enforcing health and safety protocols but also inculcate a sense of ownership of the program and responsibility for the service providers under the associations. The sector associations must conduct weekly monitoring and share the report with relevant authorities.

MONITORING BY RELEVANT AUTHORITIES

In addition to the internal monitoring and monitoring by sector associations, the governmental authorities shall conduct monitoring of tourism service providers and attraction sites to reinforce the seriousness of the implementation of the health safety protocols. A monitoring on a monthly basis may be conducted by TCB, LGs and other relevant authorities.

FINES AND PENALTIES

Fines and Penalties shall be levied as per the existing Tourism Rules and Regulations, Ministry of Health regulations, and other national regulations.

CHAPTER 3: Contingency Plan for tourism sector during lockdowns

While the overall guidance of the National COVID-19 Task Force and regulations of local Governments (Thromde and Dzongkhags) would prevail during lockdowns, the following contingency plan will be activated to complement the national efforts, depending on the situation:

1. The Tourism Incident Response Team (TIRT) comprising of the following officials led by the Director General of Tourism Council of Bhutan must convene meetings to assess the situation and provide necessary support to tourists and tourism service providers:

Sl no	Name	Designation	Functions	Contact no
1.	Mr.Dorji Dhradhul	Director General	Incident Commander	
2.	Mr. Thinley Rinzin	Chief, QAD	Vice- Incident Commander	
3.	Ms. Pema Dekar	Chief, SD	Member, Operations	
4.	Mr. Damcho Rinzin	Chief, TPD	Member, Communications	
5.	Mr. Phuntsho Gyeltshen	Head, Planning and Research	Member, Incident Action Plan	
6.	Mr. Raju Gurung and Mr. Rinzin Jamtsho	Administrative officer	Member, Logistics and transport	
7.	Mr. Jamyang Gyeltshen	Senior Accounts Officer	Member, Finance and budget mobilization	
8.	Mr. Karma Tenzin	Senior Tourism Officer	Member Secretary	

2. The Tour operator should email the status of the tourist to the TIRT team at officials@tourism.gov.bt in the format provided below:

Tour company details			Tourist details		
Tour Company	Focal Official	Contact no	Name	Country	Remarks (Interventions required)
Eg. XYZ travels	Mr. Dorji	17*****	Mr. John	France	Flight arrangement

3. Based on the various interventions requests from tourists and tourism service providers, an incident action plan must be developed by the team and implemented in collaboration with NC19TF and local Task Force.
4. Smaller teams should be formed led by various TIRT members depending on the need and as per the incident action plan. Eg. A logistic team led by the ADM officer, in coordination with COVID-19 Task Force, can facilitate transportation of tourists stranded at remote locations towards an area with better facilities, keeping in mind the COVID-19 risks.
5. Waivers such as SDF, visa extension, cancellation policies (such as accommodation bookings, transports, flights and tour operations) can be worked out either case by case basis or in advance for smooth implementation during the crisis.
6. The TIRT must seek advice and guidance of Tourism Disaster Management Committee (TDMC) comprising of Executive Directors of ABTO, GAB and HRAB, and representatives from TCB led by the Director General. The advice of Tourism Council must also be sought wherever necessary.



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Tourism Council of Bhutan