

Health Ministry protocol for churches in Cyprus



With worship in churches, mosques and other religious premises permitted from Saturday, May 23, the Health Ministry has set out health protocols.

In an announcement, it cited Cyprus' positive epidemiological picture as regards the coronavirus pandemic.

And it said that measures must apply in churches (inside and outside) and the required preconditions for churchgoers at Orthodox churches, with the aim of protecting public health.

It noted that a large part of the congregation are elderly are therefore considered vulnerable and must be protected.

In an official announcement, it said that strict compliance with the measures and instructions will allow churchgoers to go safely to churches, chapels and monasteries to pray and participate in regular services as well as weddings,

christenings etc.

It noted that the impact of summer on the virus was not in itself enough to stop transmission. The public must understand that the outbreak in Cyprus will depend on compliance with hygiene and social distance rules in our daily routine, it added.

Social distancing inside and outside places of worship

One person per eight square metres with a minimum of two metres between two people. Churchgoers can follow the service outside, maintaining the two metre rule. The loudspeakers will be switched on for services to levels permitted by law.

It is recommended that embracing, handshakes etc are avoided. Kissing the hand of the priest can be replaced by a reverential bow. It is recommended that holy bread be distributed outside, adhering to the distance rules.

Personal hygiene rules

There must be two stands with hand sanitiser at the entrance and everyone must disinfect hands. The use of masks is recommended inside. In case of coughing or sneezing, cover the nose and mouth with sleeve or tissue. The tissue that must be thrown away immediately and then disinfect hands.

Cleanliness and disinfection of surfaces and spaces

The regular cleaning and disinfection of surfaces that are touched frequently (eg door handles) is recommended.

The surface of icons and other items must be frequently disinfected. Veneration of an icon can be done without physical contact, with a bow.

Ventilation of interior

It is important that there is natural ventilation of churches when there are people inside. If there is a/c then doors and windows must remain open.

Protection of vulnerable groups

For their protection, it is recommended that vulnerable groups remain home and or only go when absolutely necessary during days with fewer churchgoers (eg week days and Saturday). Special care must be taken for vulnerable members of the clergy.

Areas for temporarily isolating individuals

Individuals who may show symptoms must be isolated temporarily away from the others. This area must be ventilated. There must be a mask for the individual to wear, napkins and hand sanitiser.

Continuation of activities online or other means of communication

The internet, social media etc can be used to post video recorded speeches, sermons. Sunday school can be taught online etc.

Church meals/social work for the needy

To avoid crowding, food must be handed out or distributed in packages. Hygiene rules must be adhered to in preparing them. Distancing rules apply.

Distributing holy bread

Instructions will be given to church officials to wash their hands and use hand sanitiser and disposable gloves and then to put the bread in transparent bags. Once these are blessed by the priest there will be put at the exit of the church where there is no crowding so that each member of the congregation can take one, maintaining distances.

[Source](#)