

Precautionary measures against the spread of COVID-19 for Hotel and Tourist Accommodation Managers

The Public Health Services of the Ministry of Health, within the framework of a set of guidelines addressed to health professionals for their protection against COVID-19, urge the hotel and tourist accommodation managers to apply the following protective measures.

It is understood that the term “tourist accommodation” includes the employees’ rest places. It is noted that for the purposes of these guidelines, all staff that comes into contact with the public or with areas visited by the public, as well as the suppliers, are considered employees in hotels and tourist accommodations. These measures should be considered the minimum measures that should be implemented. The tourist accommodation managers are advised to formulate additional measures, over and above these measures, according to the setup and conditions that exist in their areas. These additional measures should include the management of any suspected coronavirus case of COVID-19, where this concerns an employee or a customer. To this end, the Ministry of Health documents is used, entitled “Precautionary measures against the spread of COVID-19 in Workplaces”, available at https://www.pio.gov.cy/coronavirus/en/pdf/MEASURES_AGAINST_COVID-19_AT_WORKPLACES.pdf

In the context of the existing obligation of hotel owners for a Written Risk Assessment and the existence of a safety management system, the issue of coronavirus COVID-19 should also be included.

It is also important that the hotel/tourist accommodation management designate roles and responsibilities for the staff so that there is efficient circulation of information (e.g. if a member of the staff is ill, the management must be immediately informed) and in addition, the staff must be aware of the actions they should take in case of an emergency.

Types of tourist accommodations not permitted to operate:

- Tourist accommodations where customers from different families share rooms or do not have exclusive access to restrooms/showers should not operate.

Guidelines for hotels and tourist accommodations

1. Staff Hygiene

– The hotel/tourist accommodation management should distribute written guidelines and train the staff on how COVID-19 spreads, so that they are familiar with COVID-19 symptoms and be able to recognise them immediately. The aim is for the staff to be able to call for the appropriate medical assistance and laboratory testing and minimise the infection risk of both the public and the other employees.

– All staff working at the hotel/tourist accommodation should be trained as to precautionary measures: maintaining a 2-metre distance from others, use of suitable mask, gloves and handwashing and respiratory hygiene (when coughing or sneezing, cover the nose and mouth with a tissue, which should be immediately disposed of or if a tissue is not available, cover the mouth and nose with flexed elbow), avoid touching the eyes, nose and mouth with hands to reduce the risk of infection with the virus, regular hand hygiene especially after coming into contact with respiratory secretions, before eating and after using the restroom (hand hygiene includes either handwashing

with soap and water or rubbing hands with an alcohol-based solution. Rubbing hands with an alcohol-based solution is preferable when hands are not visibly soiled, wash hands with soap and water especially when visibly soiled).

- Members of the staff that display COVID-19 symptoms should refrain from work and contact immediately their personal doctor. In case they show symptoms while at work, the employee must immediately leave their position and only return when the symptoms are gone and after having mandatorily consulted their personal doctor.
- The hotel/tourist accommodation management shall make arrangements for a continuous monitoring of the staff regarding a possible display of flu symptoms. Within this framework, the management shall take care of the daily control of the temperature of all staff.
- Employees serving the public shall limit to the least possible any conversation with customers and be limited to what is absolutely necessary.
- Mandatory use of face mask and compliance with the proper hand hygiene by the floor staff and the raw material supply staff.
- Attempts should be made so that the staff works in permanent formed groups so that the possibility of virus spread is minimised in case of a suspected case.
- Regulation of breaks and staff lunch schedule so that there is no staff overcrowding.
- Persons that are at a higher risk and belong to vulnerable groups, should not carry out tasks that leave them particularly exposed (e.g. at the reception) and in general, they should try not to come into contact with customers.

2. Organisation of hotels/tourist accommodations indoor areas

- At the reception, there should be a transparent partition between the staff and the customers at a height appropriate for the protection of people on either side, from coming into direct contact with the breath of people from the other side. If this is not feasible, then the staff should mandatorily always wear a face mask.
- At the reception, there should be floor markings to ensure compliance with the physical distancing guideline.
- Mandatory dispersion of customers at 'check-in' and arrangement of said service at different times.
- Placing posters/guidelines for personal hygiene and markings for compliance with the physical distancing guidelines in public areas (e.g. the areas of customers' arrival, dining rooms, etc.).
- Informing customers about the measures taken by the hotel to avoid spreading the disease – signs/leaflets in various languages.
- When customers arrive, checks should be conducted according to the appropriate control protocols, as these are set by the Ministry of Health Decrees. External symptoms are observed and customers are kindly requested to comply with the social distancing regulations, etc. Based on the Decrees in force, temperature is electronically measured, if required, and anything else specified by the Decrees can be requested. Only one person at a time (per receptionist) can approach the reception desk, both persons maintaining the appropriate safe distance.

- Pick-up, transportation and delivery of customers' luggage by the staff is conducted complying with the appropriate protective measures, such as gloves or hand disinfection with a suitable spray. The staff maintains the 2-metre distance from the customer.
- It is prohibited to make rooms available to a new arrival, before 2 hours have passed since the previous departure, and after thorough cleaning, disinfection and ventilation. Particular emphasis should be laid on high touch surfaces, such as night stands, bed headboards, and the rest of the rooms' furniture, toilets, sinks, knobs, etc.
- Disinfection of all room keys/entrance cards after the customer's departure.
- The elevator should only be used when wearing a mask, and each hotel/tourist accommodation should set capacity limits, not exceeding 50% of maximum capacity. On each floor, in a prominent place next to the elevator door, a sign should be posted reporting the maximum number of people allowed to enter the elevator, and recommending the use of mask.
- There should be uninterrupted availability of disinfectant at the entrance, the reception area, public restrooms and other prominent points.
- There should be disposal bins with lids at prominent points around the hotel, preferable foot-operated.
- Exercising and the operation of sports installations within the accommodation should be regulated by the specific guidelines and decrees relevant to the issues.
- The use of air-conditioners is permitted, given that the constant channelling of fresh air is ensured either through mechanical systems or through regular airing out of the area (maximum number possible of doors and windows in public areas on each floor should remain open throughout 24 hours/day or at least for most part of the 24 hours and certainly during peak hours).
- In particular, regarding ventilation in public indoor restrooms, in the case of installed forced ventilation system: if possible, it should be ensured that there is constant forced ventilation in the restrooms 24 hours/day and opening the restroom windows should be avoided to achieve the correct direction of the ventilation-aeration. In public restrooms, where there is no forced ventilation system installed, the windows should be open. For public restrooms, the use of air jets for hand drying should be prohibited.
- Every bedroom in hotels/tourist accommodations should have sufficient natural ventilation. If natural ventilation is not possible, then the artificial ventilation should provide 100% fresh air without recycling.
- Special care should be taken to maintain frequent and adequate natural ventilation of public areas.
- Until a further lift of restrictions, no playgrounds shall be operated (internal or external).
- Any tablecloth/beddings washing machines and kitchen equipment dishwashers should always be in an excellent operating condition.
- Regarding air-conditioning, the terms as they are stated in the relevant guidelines issued either by the Department of Electrical and Mechanical Services or the Labour Inspection Department, of the Ministry of Health, apply. For this issue, the Labour Inspection Department has already issued a Technical Directive regarding the Operation of Air-conditioning/Ventilation Systems (HVAC), which

is available in Greek at <https://www.pio.gov.cy/assets/pdf/COVID-19%20Texnikes%20Odigies%20Kentrika%20Systimata%20Exaerismou-Klimatismou2.pdf>.

Moreover, a more regular maintenance of the air-conditioning systems, filter cleaning and proper operation check should be ensured.

3. Organisation of hotels/tourist accommodations outdoor areas

- The minimum distance between umbrellas axes is set to 4 metres.
- The minimum distance between two beach beds which are located under different umbrellas is set to 2 metres.
- A towel should mandatorily be placed on the beach bed, under the bather's responsibility.
- The management takes care of the mandatory disinfection of beach beds – chairs and tables after use by each customer. In addition, they are obliged to regularly disinfect the sanitary installations, posting a relevant schedule which is also presented in case of inspection by an authorised officer.
- Avoid any promotional activities that might prolong the public's stay beyond the necessary time and that require more people present.
- Reduce as much as possible transactions with cash and promote contactless transactions.
- Until a further lift of the restrictions, the use of changing rooms and showers operating in public enclosed areas should be avoided to the extent feasible. Where feasible, the hotel/tourist accommodation management should ensure the operation of these facilities in open areas. In case the use of changing rooms and showers in public enclosed areas is inevitable, the hotel/tourist accommodation management ensures the sufficient cleaning and disinfection of each individual changing room and shower between each use by a customer/family.
- In any case, the hotel/tourist accommodation management should ensure taking appropriate measures to avoid creating such conditions that favour the propagation of the disease bacterium of legionella.
- The facilities organisation and operation (beach beds, umbrellas) in swimming areas shall be regulated by the specific guidelines and decrees relevant to the issue.

4. Provisions of food and beverages

- Implementation of personal protective measures regarding the staff.
- Provision of food according to the relevant decrees of the Minister of Health. Regarding the hotel and tourist accommodations restaurants, the same guidelines that apply for the entertainment establishments shall apply. At this stage, the operation of bars to serve customers at hotels and tourist accommodations is not permitted, either in indoor or outdoor areas. The use of bars is permitted for the staff to prepare food/drinks.
- The minimum distance between tables of customers staying in different rooms is set at 2 metres. It is understood that if a family uses/stays in more than one room, this distance is not necessary.
- Reduce as much as possible of transactions with cash and promote contactless transactions.
- People that carry food, drinks or other items to rooms in the form of room service, should wear appropriate gloves and where possible, leave the tray with the food/drinks or items outside the

door of the room, however not on the floor. In any case, they should maintain the minimum 2-metre distance from the customer.

4.1 Buffet customer service

- At the food display area, the guidelines according to the relevant Decrees of the Minister of Health should be strictly observed to avoid overcrowding and the required distance between customers, between customers and staff and between members of the staff should be maintained.
- The food display area should be cut off in a visible and satisfactory way and the persons' entry/exit should be regulated. **During peak hours**, when the number of customers exceeds the maximum number of available seats, the entry/exit regulation and the waiting line should be controlled by a trained person.
- When entering the food display area, the proper use by the customers of the sanitizing station is ensured, **before touching** any equipment or food. However, it is preferable, and every effort possible should be made, so that serving at the buffet is provided only by the catering staff, who must be equipped with the appropriate personal protective measures (mask, gloves) and observing strict hygiene rules at all times. The aim is, among others, for the staff to avoid touching the plate after the customer has already touched it.
- Regarding coffee, tea and juice areas, where possible, more coffee, juice etc. areas should be set up and stations of automatic serving, without having to touch the machines, should be preferred. These stations should have hand hygiene stations.
- Quick customer service shall be facilitated through the provision of serving means for quick serving. The aim is to reduce the customers' stay there to 1-2 minutes. It is understood that each time the customer returns to the buffet, they should use the hygiene station and wait in line again, unless better solutions are produced.
- Quick customer service shall be facilitated and contact with food or serving equipment, such as serving tongs, should be reduced, by providing accordingly **prepared portions** or food or drinks easy to serve.
- It is recommended to offer products, food in portions, and take into consideration the environmental aspect, as well, when using portioning or wrapping materials. An example is portioned bread or individual buns.
- **Serving tongs** are of crucial importance. The following options exist: The serving tongs shall only be used by the staff to serve the customers, or, where the staff cannot serve the customers, food shall be displayed in individual plates that the customer shall carry along with them. If the common use of serving tongs is inevitable for serving a specific type of food, then there should definitely have a sanitizing station close for mandatory use by the customer before using the tongs, and the hotel/tourist accommodation management should take care of changing the tongs regularly.
- The staff performing work at the buffet includes strict personal protective measures, handwashing every time, protective mask when they should approach a customer or other persons at a distance smaller than the indicated one. This is valid for, e.g. when replacing food at the buffet, when preparing food at the buffet, when supplementing plates, silverware, glassware, etc., when the serving tongs are replaced, when the area has to be cleaned or for any other work.
- Alternatively, room service is recommended for decongestion purposes, where conditions allow for it.

- The health and safety of the staff dealing with serving food at the buffet should be ensured, through a series of actions that do not bring them into contact with other groups, especially in restaurants or at the pool area or similar areas. There are options to give a specific time of serving or, to offer a specific area or, to offer room service. The room service may be offered for free or at a reduced price, to encourage its use.
- The use of a staggered schedule is recommended for the decongestion of the customer serving areas.
- It is recommended to place a protective plexiglass partition between the customer and the food where this is possible.

5. Cleaning and disinfection

The cleaning staff must be trained in the proper cleaning and disinfection procedure regarding coronavirus COVID-19. To this purpose, the proper guidelines should be followed as they are described in the protocol “Precautionary measures against the spread of COVID-19 in Workplaces”, available at the webpage of the Public Information Office - https://www.pio.gov.cy/coronavirus/en/pdf/MEASURES_AGAINS_COVID-19_AT_WORKPLACES.pdf.

- Thorough and regular cleaning and disinfection of shared use items.
- Soap and paper towel dispensers in changing rooms and restrooms. They should always be filled with soap and paper towels, regularly checked as to their proper operation and cleaned systematically.
- The beddings and clothing should be collected in plastic bags, then washed with detergent and water at 60-90 °C and completely dried.
- Removal from rooms of all the linen whose strict hygiene cannot be ensured, e.g. beddings should be either removed, or changed upon each arrival/departure. Additional linen equipment, such as additional pillows or blankets, should be either safely packaged with a special tape after sterilisation or transported to a storage area and supplied if requested.
- Equipment of public restrooms with liquid soap, single use paper towels (which should be disposed of in foot-operated disposal bins close to the sinks) and alcohol-based hand sanitizer (alcohol content greater than 70%). When the bins’ plastic bags are full, they should be tightly tied and removed immediately. After their use, gloves should be disposed of immediately in the bins’ plastic bags and staff should not attempt to clean them, e.g. wash single use gloves and reuse them.
- Over and above the usual toilet cleaning procedures, high touch smooth surfaces (e.g. knobs, handles, staircase guards or railings, switches, faucets, elevator buttons, etc.) should be regularly and thoroughly cleaned with common cleaning products, i.e. liquid soap and water, or chlorine solution (sodium hypochlorite in 0,1% concentration) or hydrogen peroxide in 0,5% concentration or with an alcohol-based disinfectant (ethanol 70%). It is noted that cleaning tasks should be conducted using gloves and a suitable for the purpose uniform.
- All programmes where customers may choose to be excluded from housekeeping, should be cancelled so that it is not possible for someone with symptoms to stay in the room without his presence being acknowledged. Moreover, the tidying staff should be able to discretely inform a responsible person in case they locate a suspicious case.
- The cleaning staff entering rooms, should wear single use masks and a surgical mask and apply hands hygiene after disposing of them.

6. Consumables

Care should be taken to always keep in the hotel/tourist accommodation immediately accessible sufficient consumable products for the prevention of diseases:

- soap
- alcohol-based hand sanitizers (70% ethanol)
- paper tissues/paper towels
- protective face masks
- single use gloves
- body thermometer
- disposal bags
- liquid surface cleaning detergent

7. Contact tracing

For the purposes of public health protective actions, the hotel management should keep a record of:

1. staff members indicating their place of work/transportation within the hotel.
2. all persons staying at the hotel/tourist accommodation: -name, nationality, date of arrival and of departure, contact details (address, telephone, e-mail), room number, so that it is possible to communicate with the close contacts of any COVID-19 case, which may be identified later.
3. external partners/guests who came into the hotel either for work (for which it is recorded exactly where and when it took place) or for a meeting with a relative or friend staying or working at the hotel/tourist accommodation (record the names, places visited and time).

The management of the hotel/tourist accommodation shall also ensure the discreet monitoring of the guests for any possible display of obvious flu symptoms, and where required, they shall ensure that all appropriate measures are taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19, as provided for in the relevant Decrees of the Minister of Health.

8. Dealing with a suspected/confirmed case

In case a suspected/confirmed case is located, the staff should remain calm and immediately contact the Ambulance Service call centre at 1420 (24h service) and provide the following information:

1. Name and surname
2. Country of origin
3. Passport number
4. Date of arrival at the Hotel
3. Patient's symptoms
4. Room number and address of the Hotel Unit.

During the presence of the patient at the areas of the accommodation and until their transfer to a Medical Centre, the following should be applied:

1. The patient should be informed that it is better to stay in their room with the door closed until the medical team arrives.

2. A patient that presents symptoms of a respiratory infection (fever and cough or shortness of breath), should be provided with a simple surgical mask and tissues immediately. If they do not wish to remain in their room, a new isolated area should be indicated to them.

3. If the patient is accompanied and the company wishes to stay close to attend to them (e.g. wife), they should also be given a simple surgical mask and be advised to wash their hands every time they come into contact with the patient's secretions (e.g. saliva) and definitely before touching their face or before eating or drinking.

4. The staff should be instructed to avoid entering the patient's room, unless there is a valid reason. If it is necessary, a member of the hotel staff is advised to exclusively deal with a suspected case. In this way, the number of staff members exposed to the virus.

5. Used protective equipment (simple surgical mask, gloves) should be disposed of in a bin and should under no circumstances be reused.

6. After the disposal of the protective gear, hands must be thoroughly washed with soap and water. It is stressed that the use of gloves does not substitute handwashing which is a very important precautionary measure.

7. All actions must be carried out in a calm and sensible way and with respect towards the personal data of the patient.

In case the patient is transferred, the room should be cleaned and disinfected as follows:

The unit's areas where said person moved/worked should be disinfected by an **authorised company**, according to the protocols and guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health, according to the abovementioned Decree No 15, dated 10/04/2020. It is noted that the disinfection certificate and the used disinfectant's Licence Number should be submitted to the Medical and Public Health Services.

The following are also recommended,

1. Proper cleaning of the surfaces often touched by the patient, such as knobs, restrooms surfaces, etc., especially if the surfaces had been infected with biological liquids.

2. The cleaning staff are advised to use a simple surgical mask, gloves and waterproof single use coat. For as long as they work, the cleaning staff should not touch the mouth, nose, or eyes, smoke or eat.

3. After the removal of gloves, it is necessary to properly wash hands with water and soap. It is noted that the use of gloves does not substitute handwashing, which constitutes the most important part of prevention.

4. Fabric surfaces (e.g. furniture upholstery) should be cleaned with a steam apparatus (temperature > 70 °C).