

Guidance for the Community re COVID

Pesach 5790

כי אני ה' רפאך

As doctors of the kehilla we would like to give guidance to the community with regard to the upcoming Yom Tov of Pesach and how families can keep safe during the current Coronavirus outbreak. COVID 19 has had a massive impact on our Kehilla with elderly and vulnerable losing their lives, many more needing admission to hospital and time on intensive care units and hundreds suffering the effects of the virus at home. Because the community is so tightly knit, it has spread rapidly. We cannot afford to let it spread further, as there are many more vulnerable people who will die if they are not protected.

Unfortunately, people coming together on Yom Tov will provide an opportune time for the disease to spread again unless, as a community, we stand together to take urgent action to prevent this from happening. Painful decisions need to be made to protect each other at this time. We understand how difficult and painful this is. At a time when grandparents should be together with their grandchildren, we are pleading that families take every step possible to stay apart. In this Mokom Sakonno, it will be the silent transmission from non-symptomatic children, or innocent mothers who have just been shopping, who will unknowingly transmit the virus to the most vulnerable. *We cannot stress enough the importance of shielding the vulnerable and maintaining social distancing at all times.*

Individual situations can be discussed with the patient's GP as these points are not all inclusive and there will be multiple other scenarios and cases that would need guidance. Please endeavour to use NHS and GOV.UK websites as much information is contained there. We will start by mentioning general rules and then discuss Pesach:

Basic Rules

Anyone who has had the virus can go out after 7 days as long as there is no longer any fever, even if the cough remains present. If the fever is continuing a person needs to wait for 48hrs after the last fever before they can end isolation. The other, non-infected members of the household who are isolating to prevent the spread of the virus, need to continue to isolate for 14 days from when the infected person developed symptoms. If they themselves develop symptoms during these 14 days, they isolate for 7 days from the onset of symptoms as stated above. *However, when the isolation ends for all, everyone in the house still need to keep strict social distancing laws when they go out.*

Carers and Domestic Helps

The government differentiates between '*essential care*' and '*non-essential care*'. Carers for elderly/sick/housebound (who are not independent) are considered '*essential*' and therefore, as long as the carers do not have symptoms, can continue to care. This must be done using personal protective equipment (gloves, apron, mask) and keeping strict social distancing when not engaged in care.

A Domestic Helper comes under the same rules and in some situations can be considered '*essential*'.

Domestic help in a house that is isolating: Certainly a Domestic Helper should not come in to a house where people are isolating as this will put the worker themselves at risk – unless the help they are providing is *absolutely essential* for patient care. They should then be advised that the family is in isolation and protect themselves with personal protective equipment if they are happy to continue to work.

Domestic Help in a Household that is not in isolation but houses a vulnerable patient: Mostly, if there are members of the immediate household who can perform the same duties, the Domestic Helper would be considered '*non-essential*'. A Domestic Helper should therefore not come in to a house if there is a vulnerable person in it and if there are other members of the household that can undertake this work.

These rules of caring for the vulnerable remain relevant for Yom Tov and one needs to weigh up what is considered '*essential*' and '*non-essential*' and plan in advance.

Domestic Help in a Household that is not in isolation and does not house a vulnerable patient: If the household is not in isolation, because domestic help is generally '*non-essential*' in most cases and can be carried out by the members of the household themselves - a domestic helper or cleaner must not come into the house – as this will put both the household and the cleaner at risk. In the unusual situation a family is unable to cope without cleaning help, and the situation is therefore '*essential*', strict social distancing/handwashing laws must apply.

Pesach

- Only household members should have Yom Tov together
- Family members & guests who are not part of the immediate household should not be invited to spend Yom Tov or partake of any meals – this includes grandparents, children and grand-children
- Households should NOT be inviting family/guests and sitting them at the end of long tables in an attempt at social distancing. The risk of transmission is far too great to pretend this set up will prevent the virus from spreading
- If a member of the household has symptoms, the guidelines are that the patient should remain isolated in his/her room and not be engaging with the other family members
- Even if both the household or a potential guest have previously isolated due to possible COVID, since there is currently no testing programme and the diagnosis cannot be proven, all patients are STILL ADVISED TO MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING AT ALL TIMES AND NOT SPEND TIME WITH OTHERS who are not part of their own household for Yom Tov.
- This is because they may not actually have had Coronavirus or may not have developed antibodies to protect themselves and therefore remain at risk. We do not know enough about the disease at this point in time to ensure people's safety in this situation
- This may leave many in a difficult predicament. There will inevitably be individuals who will find this challenging, but everyone is requested to help stop the spread of the virus in the community and prevent the loss of lives
- These rules come under the Government Guidance of 'Social Distancing' – this means not being with other people who one does not normally live with and only interacting with others for absolute essential items (food etc.), for the minimal amount of time as possible and keeping a distance from them of more than 2m - *Yom Tov & Seder will make this very difficult and increase the risk of the virus spreading.*
- People who will find this difficult may be making individual decisions to spend time with friends or family. ***This is against the Government's and our medical advice.***
- We are aware that there are groups, including the elderly, those with underlying emotional issues or chronic health issues and those who are isolated, who may decide it is more important for them to be with others during Pesach. However, due to the urgency of the situation, medical guidance is directed towards preserving physical life first and foremost, while the virus is affecting so many in the population.

Social distancing saves lives. It is essential that we continue to take every precaution, keep washing hands regularly and ensure there are no private minyanim or gatherings, not even outside, no guests for yom tov and no social interaction.

Keep apart today so we can celebrate together tomorrow!

For further information and details of the symptoms of COVID-19 please visit the NHS website <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19>.

May we all be blessed with a peaceful, healthy and happy Pesach.

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