



Republic of Palau

Ministry of Health

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PRESS RELEASE

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MOH TAKES MEASURES TO ENHANCE PREVENTION, PREPAREDNESS, AND RESPONSE EFFORTS

March 31, 2020

KEY POINTS:

- On March 17, 2020, **Ministry of Health Directive No. 60-20, as Certification of an Unavoidable Public Health Emergency, and putting in place Hospital and Public Health Measures as outlined below.**
- MOH continues to urge the public to practice basic preventive measures including:
 - **Respiratory etiquette (cover your cough and sneeze with a clean tissue or your sleeve)**
 - **Frequent handwashing with soap & warm water or hand rub with 70% alcohol-based sanitizer**
 - **Avoid sick people, at least 6 feet away.**
 - **If you are sick, stay at home.**
 - **Avoid large crowds.**
 - **If you need medical attention, call the BNH (488-2555 or 488-2558) for instructions.**

At the Belau National Hospital:

1. NCD and other non-urgent clinics have been reduced or cancelled, and clinicians and staff will be calling patients at later times for follow up and medication refills. See attached schedule of clinics.
2. High risk populations including older adults ages 55 and older, and those with chronic diseases/NCDs (diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, lung diseases) are advised to reschedule any non-essential appointments and avoid visiting the Hospital unless seeking urgent medical care. See attached schedule of clinics.
3. In-patient visiting hours are limited to one (1) hour per day, and all patients are allowed one (1) caretaker at any given time. Visiting hours from 6pm – 7pm daily.
4. Mortuary viewing (of a deceased person) will be restricted to one (1) hour, or per Mortuary Services policy.
5. Loitering is not permitted at any and all MOH facilities.
6. Health screening will be implemented at all BNH points of entry. Details to be announced.
7. MOH personnel are encouraged to stay home if they are seek.
8. All MOH employee travel overseas are suspended until further notice.

Public Health Measures include:

1. Discourage mass gatherings of fifty (50) people or more (i.e., parties, meetings or conferences, sporting events, cultural or social gatherings, other types of assemblies).
2. Encourage the general public to exercise self-care and self-quarantine (staying at home and away from others).
3. Encourage social distancing, staying at least 6 feet away from other people whenever possible.
4. Impose mandatory fourteen (14) day self-quarantine for all travelers with a travel history from or through COVID-19 affected geographical areas. This will be based on health assessment provided at point of entry.
5. Encourage people to contact the Hospital ER if they show COVID-19 symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath).
6. Encourage employers, business, and conference/event organizers to engage in virtual meetings (teleconference, videoconferencing) instead of face-to-face conventions.
7. Encourage employers to provide adequate paid sick leave for sick employees.
8. Encourage all schools and child-care centers to dismiss sick children and students, and to promote preventive measures in all education and child-care settings.
9. Encourage agencies responsible for elderly care to implement preventive measures to limit the risk of infection in this high-risk population.
10. Expand and intensify risk communication efforts to all population groups, especially high-risk populations such as the elderly/older adults and people with chronic diseases/NCDs, to promote proper handwashing and respiratory etiquettes and other relevant preventive measures.
11. Encourage everyone to observe all MOH alerts, advisories, information releases, and technical guidance, and
12. Maintain collaboration with NEC and other relevant community partners to execute and implement all necessary COVID-19 prevention and containment measures in the community.

The Ministry of Health will continue to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and advise the public on any developments. For more information about COVID-19, contact the MOH Hotline at **488-0555**.