

COVID-19 GUIDELINES

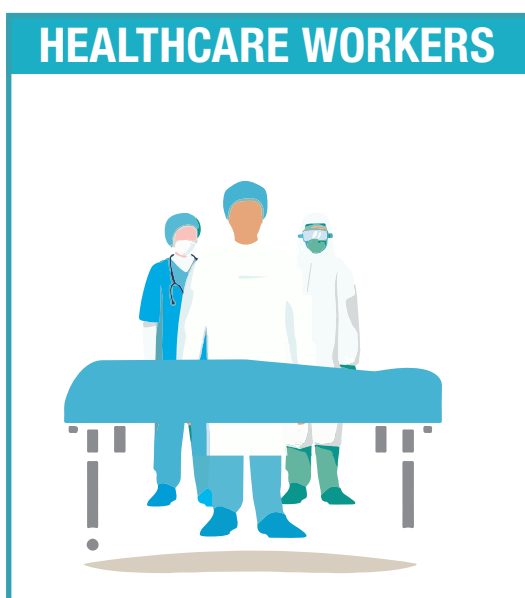
ON MANAGEMENT OF THE DEAD IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES



Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, last rites across communities and faiths around the world have been accelerated and adapted to minimise the number of people in close contact with a dead body. These changes affect the way people cope with the death of a loved one. Among tribals of the Indian subcontinent, cultural practices, rituals and terminologies are as varied as the number of tribes and familiarity with cultural and religious practices can significantly aid the personnel involved in dead body management. The ICRC's guidance on management of the dead during COVID-19 aims to protect the lives of healthcare workers, body handlers and the rest of the community.

THE ICRC GUIDANCE AIMS TO ENSURE SAFETY OF HEALTHCARE WORKERS AND THE COMMUNITY, ALONG WITH THE DIGNITY OF THE DECEASED

- ✔ Apart from physical distancing and avoiding contact, ICRC advocates caution with respect to handling of COVID-19 dead bodies, since it remains unclear for how long the risk of infection from the dead body or bodily fluids persists.
- ✔ If family members wish to see the body, they should use PPE to do so before the body is bagged.
- ✔ PPE must be used by body handlers and the dead body must be completely wrapped in a leakage-proof body bag (or double-bagged) before being moved to the mortuary.
- ✔ The body bag(s) should not be opened again prior to cremation.
- ✔ Bodies should not be embalmed or injected with preservatives. The process can result in unnecessary manipulation of the body that may expel fluid from the body's cavity and/or result in aerosolisation leading to an increased risk for those performing such procedure.
- ✔ Non-essential complete autopsies need not be performed.
- ✔ Every effort should be made to ensure reliable documentation, identification and traceability of the dead so as to avoid misidentification and trauma for loved ones.
- ✔ While dead body management and funeral rites should be adapted to maintain social and physical distancing, hasty and careless disposal of the bodies must be avoided.
- ✔ Irrespective of whether the body is infectious or not, there is a chance that family members of the deceased are infected. Gatherings at home, hospitals, mortuary and funerals are inadvisable regardless of how the dead body is handled and have sometimes been banned.
- ✔ Those who attend the funeral must safely dispose of the PPE and properly practice hand hygiene by washing themselves with soap, water or alcohol-based sanitiser.



The guidelines issued by Government of India related to the final rites of those confirmed / believed to have died due to COVID-19 are also accessible on the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare website:

https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/1584423700568_COVID19GuidelinesonDeadbodymanagement.pdf



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