

ADVISORY NOTE: *Safe Ramadan practices in the context of COVID-19 in Indonesia*

Considering the very high risk of ongoing transmission of COVID-19, WHO strongly recommends that people refrain from large gatherings.

Purpose

This document highlights public health advice for social and religious practices and gatherings during Ramadan that is applicable to Indonesia in consideration of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Informed decision making for conducting religious and social gatherings

The Government of Indonesia has already cancelled social and religious gatherings. This decision is part of a comprehensive approach taken by national authorities to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak.

WHO has acknowledged the Ministry of Religious Affairs circular letter number No.SE.6/2020: Guidance for Ramadan and Eid Al-Fitr 1 Shawwal 1441 H during COVID-19 Pandemic which is in line with the WHO recommendation and supports its implementation.

General advice

1. Seriously consider the cancellation of social and religious gatherings and where possible, consider virtual alternatives using platforms such as television, radio, web streaming, or social media.
2. Strictly adhere to physical distancing.
3. Use culturally and religiously sanctioned greetings that avoid physical contact.
4. Stop large numbers of people gathering in places associated with Ramadan activities, such as entertainment venues, markets, and shops.
5. Collection and distribution of Sadaqat or zakah during Ramadan should consider the physical distancing and healthy hygiene.
6. Well-being:
 - a. Fasting: No studies of fasting and risk of COVID-19 infection have been performed. Healthy people should be able to fast during this Ramadan as in previous years, while COVID-19 patients may consider religious licenses regarding breaking the fast in consultation with their doctors, as they would do with any other disease.

- b. Physical activity: During the COVID-19 pandemic, in Indonesia many people are restricted in their movements; indoor physical movement and online physical activity classes are encouraged.
 - c. Healthy diet and nutrition: Proper nutrition and hydration are vital during the month of Ramadan. People should eat a variety of fresh and unprocessed foods every day and drink plenty of water.
 - d. Tobacco: Tobacco use is ill-advised under any circumstances, especially during Ramadan and the COVID-19 pandemic. Frequent smokers may already have lung disease, or reduced lung capacity, which greatly increases the risk of serious COVID-19 illness.
 - e. Promoting mental and psychosocial health: Despite the different execution in practices this year, it is important to reassure the faithful that they can still reflect, improve, pray, share, and care – all from a healthy distance. Ensuring that family, friends, and elders are still engaged considering physical distancing; encouraging alternate and digital platforms for interaction is paramount. Offering special prayers for the sick, alongside messages of hope and comfort, are methods to observe the tenants of Ramadan while maintaining public health.
 - f. Responding to situations of domestic violence: In settings where movement restrictions are in place, incidents of domestic violence, particularly against women, children, and marginalized people, are likely to increase. Religious leaders can actively speak out against violence and provide support or encourage victims to seek help.
7. Continue practicing other preventive hygiene measures:
- a. Frequently wash hands with soap and clean running water or with alcohol-based hand-rub (at least 70% alcohol).
 - b. Practice good respiratory etiquette by covering mouth and nose with a bent elbow or tissue to cough or sneeze. Any used tissues should be immediately disposed of in a lidded bin and hands should be thoroughly washed.
 - c. Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth.

Reference:

- WHO, Safe Ramadan practices in the context of the COVID-19, Interim guidance, 15 April 2020
- Kemenag, Surat Edaran No.SE.6/2020, Panduan Ibadah Ramadhan dan Idul Fitri 1 Syawal 1441 H Di Tengah Pandemi wabah COVID-19