

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



MINISTRY OF TOURISM
REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES

URGENT

C I R C U L A R

Ref Number: 88-SS/CIR/2020/54
Date: 10 August 2020
To: All Tourist Resorts & Safari Vessels
Subject: **COVID-19: PCR Testing & Sample Collection**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Reference is made to our circular no. 88-QARS/CIR/2020/51, dated August 1, 2020.

Regarding PCR testing, please be informed that tourist facilities must have a trained medical professional to collect samples for Covid-19 testing. HPA can provide training for sample collection and safe transportation. Moreover, tourist facilities can liaise with transportation providers to send the sample to a testing facility according to guidelines of HPA. Further to our circular mentioned above, please find below options tourist facilities can adopt for staff and tourists who require such a test as a requirement of the airline they are flying or the screening process required from the next port of disembarkation of the guest.

1. Tourist facilities may liaise with licensed private laboratories for sampling of tourists and staff for COVID-19 testing in accordance with the procedures set forth by the respective laboratory. For transportation of the samples to the laboratory, tourist facilities may utilize available domestic transportation arrangements or additionally Tourist Police station at Male' Velana International Airport will facilitate the transportation arrangements of the samples from VIA to laboratories in Male' area.
2. Government of Maldives have allocated set number of slots per day for Covid-19 PCR testing of departure guests at IGMH. Tourists facilities may follow the "IGMH Pathway for Covid-19 testing on Departure" attached with this circular for testing arrangements. Tourist facilities are required to fulfill all arrangements of taking the samples and submitting them to IGMH laboratory in accordance with the HPA's "Protocol for Covid-19 testing in a tourist establishment prior to departure" attached with circular. For tests carried out at IGMH, tourist facilities are required to book a testing slot prior to a minimum of 72 hours ahead of departure flight time and to submit the samples to the laboratory 48 hours ahead of departure.



3. Furthermore, to ease the logistics of transporting the samples to testing laboratories, the Government of Maldives have arranged a mechanism for these samples to be transported through atoll collection points (Atoll and Regional Hospitals). Tourist facilities opting out for this option are required to make arrangements with a testing laboratory, take the samples and transport it to the designated collection point(s). Tourist facilities must coordinate with the focal point of the collection points and ensure that samples will reach the testing laboratory within the time frame set by the respective laboratory. Costs associated with the transportation of the samples are to be borne by the respective tourist facility.
4. Tourist Resorts may also come to commercial arrangements with licensed health care providers for sampling of their staff and guests. UTM test kits required for sampling will be made available for tourist facilities from STO Medicals.
5. For Safari Vessels a testing booth is being setup at Hulhumale' Jetty area. In addition, vessels operating or cruising across the country may coordinate with the Atoll or Regional Hospital focal points and make arrangements for sampling. However, safari vessels are required to keep a stock of UTM test kits and make arrangements of sample transportation through atoll collection points or any other means of transportation.

We advise all facilities to adhere to the guidelines set forth by all relevant Authorities and remind all facilities to **ensure that tourists, who require a negative PCR test result for their outbound flight or onward destination, are not taken to the airport for departure without a negative test result on hand.**

For any queries please contact us through our hotline 7223131 or email smu@tourism.gov.mv

Your support and cooperation at all times is highly appreciated.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

Ali Razzan

Senior Executive Director

Protocol for COVID-19 testing in a tourist establishment prior to departure

General requirements

- Every tourist should check the immigration regulations of his/her home country/ destination country regarding the requirement for a COVID-19 test, prior to entry in to the country.
- Tourist should inform the tourist establishment regarding the requirement for COVID-19 testing for return travel/ onward travel. The information should be shared with the establishment in advance so that there is adequate time to do the testing. At least 48 hours should be provided to the lab to perform the testing and to provide results.
- The tourist establishment should arrange COVID-19 testing for the tourist in accordance with the testing requirements and within the time frame as required by the regulations of the tourists' home country/destination country.

Procedure for COVID-19 testing while at tourist establishment:

Resort

- For tourists staying at a resort, COVID-19 sample should be collected at the resort by the trained health care professional. Each resort should have their own Viral transport media (VTM tubes) with sampling swabs.
- In case where assistance for sample taking is required, the resort has to contact the nearest island health facility who can facilitate a trained person to take the sample.
- All costs incurred for the travel of the health care provider (up and down to the resort), PPE of the health care provider, food and other additional requirements should be borne by the resort.
- It is the responsibility of the resort to arrange transportation of sample to the designated health care facility for testing.

Safari

- Safaris should make an arrangement with the nearest health care facility to take COVID-19 sample. The RRT/health care professional should get into the safari and collect the sample
- All costs incurred for the travel of RRT/health care professional (up and down to the resort), PPE of the health care provider, food and other additional requirements should be borne by the resort.
- It is the responsibility of the tourist facility to arrange the transport of the sample to the designated laboratory for testing.

Personnel who will perform the sampling:

A licensed doctor/health care professional who has been trained to take the nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal swab sample.

Type of sample to be taken: Oropharyngeal (OP) and Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab.

Type of test to be done: PCR for SARS-CoV-2

Designated labs for testing departure request samples:

The testing capacity and prices may vary between the labs. Currently labs where tourist's departure screening samples could be taken include:

- IGMH
 - Maldives Police Services
 - Kulhudhuffushi Regional Hospital
 - Addu Equatorial Hospital
 - N. Maafaru International Airport.
 - ADK hospital
 - Tree Top Hospital
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- The tourist establishment (tourist resort, safari) should make an arrangement with any of the above designated labs for testing the tourists who stay in their facility.
- The list of facilities available for testing and the testing prices will be updated regularly on the websites of Ministry of Health and Ministry of Tourism.

Items required for performing the sampling.

- Swabs used for influenza sampling (sterile Dacron/Nylon swab with plastic shaft)
- Viral transport media (VTM) tubes with labels
- Absorbent material (cotton/tissue paper)
- Zip lock bags
- Cooler box with frozen ice packs
- Case reporting form (If sampler portal is unavailable)
- Diluted bleach solution (1 part of bleach in 49 parts of water) for disinfection of surfaces.
- Waste bin lined with double bags

Procedure for sample collection

- The person collecting the sample should wear appropriate PPE: Gloves, Mask, goggles OR face shield and long-sleeved Gowns
- Sampling procedure should be verbally explained to the person. The possibility of requiring a repeat sampling in case of an inconclusive lab result should be explained.
- Make sure that the person's particulars are filled accurately as per details in the passport/ ID card, in the case reporting form by the clinic doctor/health care professional.
- Persons information should also include the persons contact number (local phone number/Viber or WhatsApp contact number) and persons E-mail address. The details should also include the contact number and E-mail address of a person from the tourist establishment who is responsible for the person. The person should indicate the preferred method to receive result.
- Label the sample tube properly. Persons particulars should be accurately filled as per details in the passport/ ID card. The details on the sample tube and the details on the sampler online portal/ form should match (otherwise lab may not process the sample)

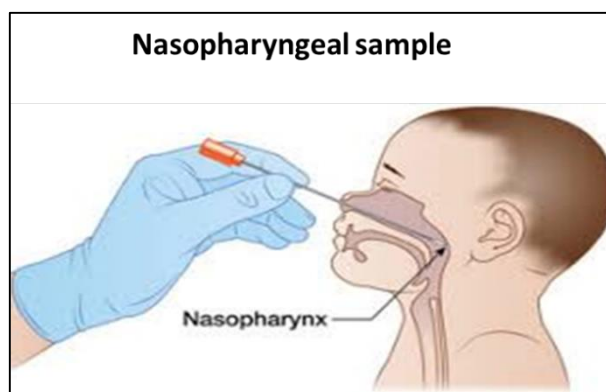
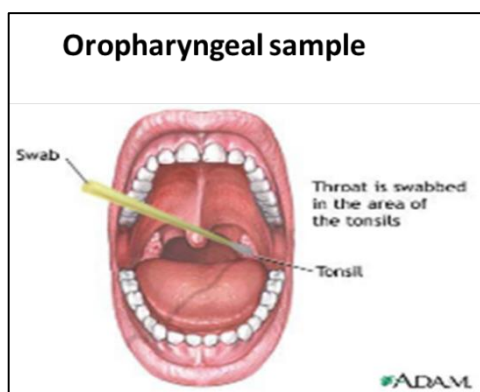
- Collect the sample using techniques as described below.

Oropharyngeal (OP)swab:

- Hold the tongue out of the way with a tongue depressor
- Insert the swab into the posterior pharynx and tonsillar areas and rub the swab over both tonsillar pillars and posterior oropharynx
- Avoid swabbing the soft palate and do not touch the tongue with the swab tip
- Place the swab immediately into the VTM tube.
- The swab shaft extends past the top of the tube. Break the swab shaft at the break line on the shaft allowing the end with the swab tip to remain in the liquid.

Nasopharyngeal (NP) swab:

- Insert NP swab through the nares parallel to the pallet (not upwards) until resistance is encountered
- Gently rub and roll the swab and leave the swab in place for several seconds to absorb secretions before removing
- Withdraw slowly with a rotating motion
- Place the swab immediately into the VTM tube.
- The swab shaft extends past the top of the tube. Break the swab shaft at the break line on the shaft allowing the end with the swab tip to remain in the liquid.



- Put the samples into the VTM tube. Place the cap of the VTM tube and tighten the cap securely.
- Wrap the sample tube with absorbent material such as cotton or tissue paper. The sample tube must be wrapped in enough absorbent material to absorb all the fluid in the event of a breakage or leakage.
- Put the wrapped sample tube in a primary zip lock bag and close the bag securely. Then put this in to the secondary zip lock bag and close the zip lock bag securely.
- Place the packed sample immediately in the fridge at 2-8 °C if there is going to be any delay in transport. (samples may be stored at this temperature for up to 72 hours)
- For transportation of the samples, place the packed samples in the upright position inside the cooler box and place the frozen icepacks inside the cooler box.
- After closing the cooler box, the exterior of the box should be wiped with 1:50 bleach solution (1-part bleach to 49 parts water).
- In a case where manual case reporting form was filled, the form should be placed in a zip lock bag and transported with the specimen.
- The cooler box should be packed in a carrier bag or wrapped in a plastic bag.
- Print and fill up the package label given in this document and fix it on the package.
- Fix the orientation label on the package: The label must show two arrows pointing in the correct upright direction. The arrows must be rectangular and of a size that is clearly visible, and appropriate to the size of the package. The label must appear on two opposite vertical sides of the package

Transportation of the sample

- Sample can be transported by any suitable mode of transport. (i.e speed launch, domestic flight, sea plane or by land transport) depending on the location of the tourist facility and the lab.
- Arrangements for transport of the sample from the site of sampling to the testing lab should be arranged by the tourist establishment.
- A designated vehicle is not required to exclusively transport the sample. The sample can be transported in the same conveyance used for general passenger transport.

- The person who is transporting the sample should wear gloves and mask.
- After delivering the sample to the lab, he/she should remove the glove and perform hand washing with soap and water.
- If there is any spillage of the samples, perform spill decontamination (follow the spill decontamination procedure as outlined in COVID-19 quick reference guidelines <https://covid19.health.gov.mv/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/COVID-19-QR-SOPs-v10.pdf>.)
- Sample will be rejected if the extent of spillage is deemed to have affected other samples or the sample carrier itself.
- Samples which have verification issues (e.g. mismatch in personal details between the sample tube label and persons details which are entered on the sampler portal) will be retained in the laboratory until the issue is resolved. Lab will call up the port health clinic to inform regarding the issue.

Laboratory result

- The testing lab will enter the person's PCR results to the COVID-19 outbreak online system and inform HPA focal point when the results are ready (this is to expedite the process of informing the results to the tourist).
- PCR result should be available in the form of a result slip should be on the official letter head of health facility.
- The result slip should have the person's particulars as stated in the passport/ID card. It should indicate the date the sample was taken and the date of testing. The result slip should be signed by a lab technician and should have the official stamp of the laboratory/ health facility.
- The result slip can be electronically sent to the person or the individual designated by the person.

Informing the result

Negative results:

- HPA will send a message to the contact number as preferred by the person (SMS or Viber/WhatsApp message) to inform the result.

- HPA will also inform the result to the doctor/health care professional or the focal point at the tourist establishment.
- A printable result slip will be emailed to the person or individual designated by the person (via E-mail, Viber or WhatsApp).

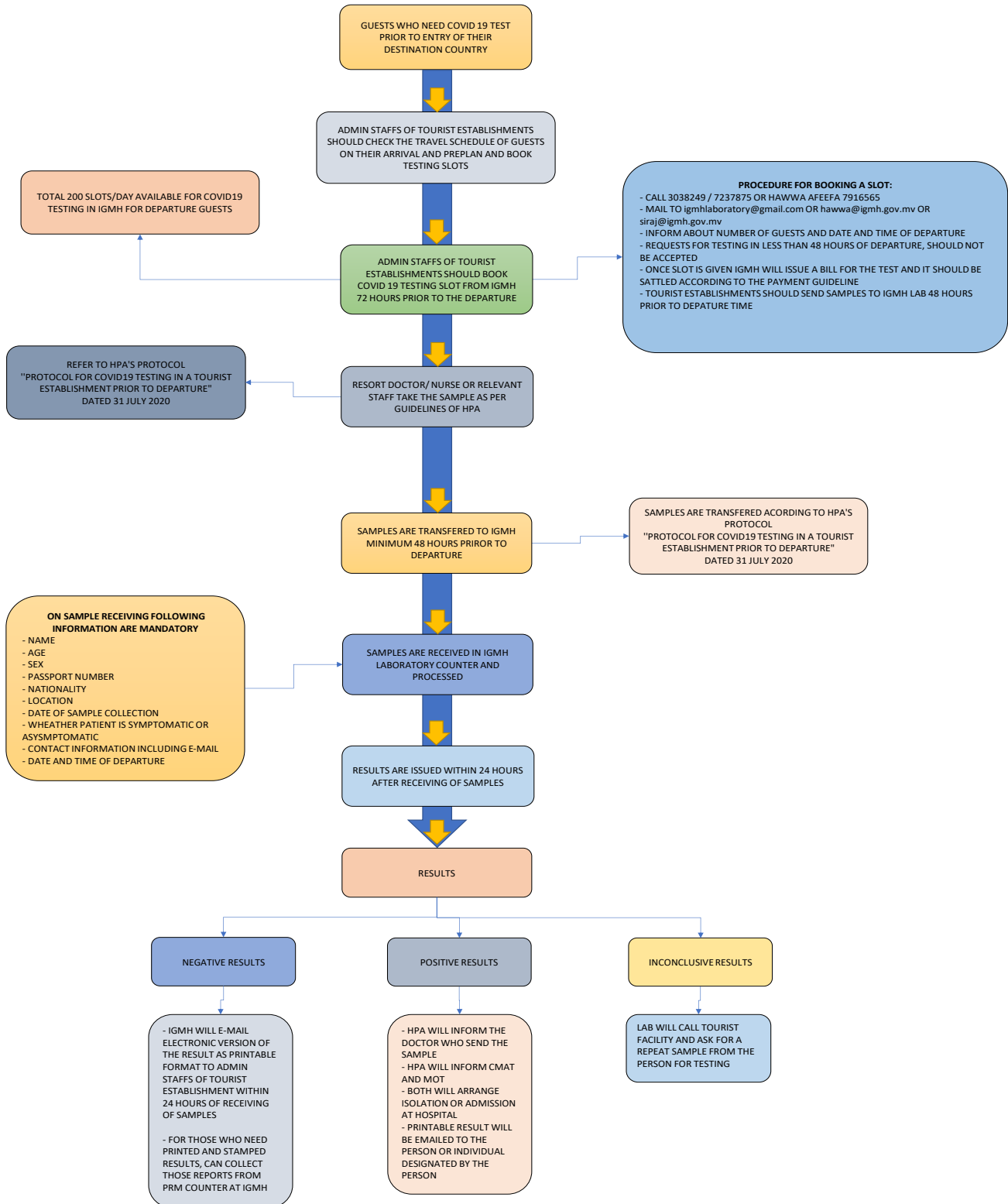
Positive results:

- HPA will inform the result to the doctor/health care professional or the focal point at the tourist establishment who will inform the patient.
- HPA will simultaneously inform the Clinical Management Advisory Team (CMAT) and Ministry of Tourism focal point.
- HPA and Ministry of Tourism focal points will coordinate with focal point in the tourist establishment regarding arrangements for isolation of the patient in the resort or designated isolation facility if admission is required.
- A printable result slip will be emailed to the person or individual designated by the person (via E-mail, Viber or WhatsApp), upon completion of isolation period

Inconclusive results:

Rarely the PCR result may be inconclusive. If this happens, the lab should call the tourist facility and ask for a repeat sample from the person for testing.

IGMH PATHWAY FOR COVID19 TESTING ON DEPARTURE



IMPORTANT TO NOTICE:

- **BOOKING FOR TESTING:**
 - The validity period of Covid19 PCR test result is 72 hours, so the booking for PCR testing should be within 72 hours of departure. IGMH will not take responsibility of too early or late testing
 - On booking for covid19 test, the tourist establishment should settle the bill for the test
- **SAMPLE TAKING, PACKING, TRANSFER:**
 - Sample taking, packing, transfer is responsibility of the tourist establishment. IGMH will not take responsibility of any unfortunate circumstances that may arise due to failure to follow HPA protocols in all these steps
- **SAMPLE RECEIVING:**
 - IGMH laboratory staffs should check the eligibility of transferred samples by completing receiving-checklist, similarly it is the responsibility of the tourist establishment to complete all formalities required to process the covid19 test. IGMH should not accept incomplete or inadequately prepared samples
- **RESULTS:**
 - Inconclusive results: IGMH will process the reconfirmation test as soon as possible to provide definitive test result for the guest, but will not take any responsibility of consequences arising from missed flight.

ATOLL HEALTH FOCAL POINTS

Atoll	Island	Island Focal Point's Name	Mobile Number
HA	Ha.Atoll Hospital	Hawwa Waheeda	9823191/ 7823191
HDH	Kuludhuffushi Regional Hospital	ACHO Khadeeja Hassan	9933440
DH	Sh. Funadhoo Atoll Hospital	AHMED SHAREEF	7412365
N	N. Manadhoo Hospital	Ismail Shafeeq	7852253
R	R. Ungoofaaru Regional Hospital	Ahmed Maahiru	7902564
B	B. Eydhafushi Hospital	Maimoona / Shazly	9912083/ 7974996
LH	LH. Naifaru Hospital	Shaheema Moosa	9696266
K	K. Thulusdhoo HC	Ahmed Rasheed	7778801
AA	AA. Rasdhoo Hospital	Zameera	9935732
ADH	Adh. Mahibadhoo Hospital	Aminath Nadhira	9746060
V	V.Felidhoo Atoll Hospital	ali faisal	7866695
M	M.Mulee Regional Hospital	Ismail Sodig	9871553
F	F. Atoll hospital	Shuaib Ismail	7834950
DH	DH. Atoll Hospital	Ali Nazim	7962218
TH	TH. Atoll Hospital	Mohamed Manik SCHO	9715077
L	Gan Regional Hospital	Mariyam Zahula	9416009
GA	GA. Atoll Hospital	Asma Abdulla	7971821
GDH	Dr. Abdul Samad Memorial Hospital	Shahuza Hussain	9949591
GN	Fuvahmulah Hospital	Aminath	7796227
S	S. Hithadhoo	Aishath Shafa	9668042

For UTM kits please contact

STO Medicals

Tel: +9603012540

Email: medical@stomaldives.net