



Date: 10 August 2020
Document Code: 42-01
Version: 01

Guidelines

Health Guidelines for Reopening of Parks, Playgrounds and Recreational Facilities

Objective

To provide health and safety guidelines for the administration and workers/staff of recreational facilities including public parks, playgrounds, trails, amusement parks, campgrounds etc. and for general public to minimize the risk of COVID-19 infection and transmission.

Rationale

The importance of engaging in any type of physical activity cannot be repudiated for both physical and mental health and parks, trails, and open spaces can provide such opportunities to wide range of public. At present, the entire world is gripped by the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and this new coronavirus had infected people worldwide at an astonishing pace, including Pakistan. The pandemic has a major impact on our society. While all sectors of the world's economy are affected by the coronavirus, the recreational and leisure industry has been hit particularly hard. The doors of amusement/visiting parks, playgrounds and sports locations had been closed since few months. Closures of parks and green spaces had limited the options for physical activity and affecting physical and mental wellbeing of people especially vulnerable populations.

Taking cognizance of the current situation and keeping in view the flattening of epidemic curve in the country, the Government of Pakistan has decided to open this recreational sectors including parks and playgrounds with provided SOPs. As exposure to nature or green space has well documented positive physical and mental health benefits, therefore, people are encouraged to use parks, trails, and open spaces safely while following provided guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Park and recreation agencies should also treat the coronavirus pandemic with the prudence and seriousness that an impending natural disaster or infectious disease outbreak calls for.

Instructions

A) Guidance for General Public to Avoid Exposure

Staying physically active is one of the best ways to keep mind and body healthy. Visit parks, trails, campgrounds, and open spaces by adopting following preventive measures;

- Visit parks that are close to your home.
- Maintain at least 6 feet/2 meters distance between any two persons.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.



- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean hands with an alcohol-based hand rub/sanitizer (70-90% alcohol content), before eating or after touching any surface
- Wear a face mask (disposable/cloth face covering), if feasible and whenever people are within six feet of each other. Masks should not be placed on:
 - Children under age 2.
 - Anyone who has trouble breathing.
 - Anyone who is unconscious, can't move, or is otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
 - When engaging in activities where the mask might become wet.
- Follow standard operating procedures for the containment and disposal of used PPE.
- Practice respiratory hygiene i.e. sneezing or coughing into a tissue/handkerchief followed by discarding it immediately and hand washing, OR coughing into own elbow.
- The use of equipment such as phones, headphones, microphones, and other personal equipment should not be shared, and should be sanitized before and after each use.
- Consider exercising in quieter, less-used spaces.
- Please take all your litter home with you and discard properly.
- Pay attention to instructions provided by parks administration/staff or any officials on site.
- Do not visit crowded parks or campgrounds.
- Do not visit parks if sick, tested positive, or recently exposed to COVID-19 suspected or confirmed individual.

B) Guidance for Administrators and Staff

- There should be designated entry points deputed with trained personnel for “Thermal screening” of all on entrance.
- Individuals exhibiting fever (temperatures equal to or greater than 99°F) or having other prominent signs of COVID-19 (cough or shortness of breath) should not be allowed access into the Parks.
- Hand washing and/or hand sanitizer stations should be made available at entrance and outdoor locations throughout the park property. Ensure these dispensers are regularly refilled with an alcohol-based hand rub/sanitizer (70-90% alcohol content).
- Provide staff with up-to-date information about COVID-19 in the local area and park policies on a regular basis.
- Encourage the staff to wear cloth face covering/face masks while in the premises.
- Consider conducting daily health checks (for example, temperature screening or symptom checking) of staff.
- Use flexible sick leave policies and revised duties, especially for staff at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- Remind staff to stay at home if they are sick
- Communicate to park staff the importance of practicing healthy hygiene habits, such as washing hands often, covering coughs and sneezes, and social distancing to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Posters should be pasted at prominent places reflecting information regarding possible ways of exposure and preventive measures.



- Outdoor areas generally require normal routine cleaning and do not require disinfection.
- Outdoor hard surfaces and objects frequently touched by multiple people (e.g., handrails, benches, swing sets) should be disinfected. Make sure disinfectant has thoroughly dried before allowing children to play.
- Ensure safe and correct use and storage of disinfectants, including storing products securely away from children.
- Change layouts in seating areas to ensure individuals can remain at least 6 feet apart from each other.
- Provide physical cues or guides and visual cues and signs to ensure social distancing.
- Reduce the number of people to prevent crowding. Modifications in scheduling might be needed to help control the number of visitors at one time.
- If serving food, consider packaged refreshments.
- Stagger use of communal spaces if possible, and clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at least daily and shared objects each time they are used.
- Monitor areas where people are likely to gather and consider temporary closure to support social distancing practices. In the event of facility closures, park administrators may place physical barriers in these areas and post visual signs to communicate.
- Continually assess current conditions regarding the spread of COVID-19 and engage with local public health officials when deciding whether to postpone, cancel, or reduce the number of attendees (if possible) for gatherings.
- Ensure that staff rooms/restrooms have functional toilets, clean and disinfected surfaces, and hand washing supplies.
- Clean and disinfect staff rooms regularly, particularly high-touch surfaces such as faucets, toilets, doorknobs, and light switches. Use gloves for cleaning/disinfecting surfaces.
- Discouraging people from sharing items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect.
- Maintain a guest logs of parks and playgrounds (name, phone number) to facilitate health authorities in contact tracing. Maintain privacy of the data.

Note: The above recommendations are being regularly reviewed by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination and will be updated based on the international & national recommendations and best practices.

The Ministry acknowledges the contribution of Dr Farah Ashraf, Dr Ahsan M Ahmad and HSA/ HPSIU/ NIH team to compile these guidelines.



References:

1. Interim Best Practices for Reopening, Parks and Playgrounds in Response to COVID-19, June 11, 2020, Madison County Department Of Health
2. Visiting Parks and Recreational Facilities, July 30, 2020, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
3. Guidance for Administrators in Parks and Recreational Facilities, June 6, 2020, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
4. COVID-19 Reopening Guidance, Considerations for the Global Attractions Industry, Second Edition, July 10, 2020
5. London Parks and Green Spaces – COVID-19 Guidance, 31 July 2020, Mayor of London, London Assembly
6. Slater SJ, Christiana RW, Gustat J. Recommendations for Keeping Parks and Green Space Accessible for Mental and Physical Health During COVID-19 and Other Pandemics. *Prev Chronic Dis* 2020;17:200204. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd17.200204>

For more information, please contact:

HSA/ HPSIU/ NIH, PM National Health Complex, Islamabad

<http://covid.gov.pk/>

<http://nhsrc.gov.pk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/NHSRCOfficial>

<http://www.hsa.edu.pk/>

<https://twitter.com/nhsrcofficial>

<https://www.nih.org.pk/>

<https://www.youtube.com/NHSRC-PK>