



President  
**Dr. Raj Kishore Bajpal**  
26 Swamy Vivekanand Nagar  
Kanadia Road  
Indore - 452 016.

M- +91 94245 39986

Hon. Treasurer  
**Dr. Shrikant H. Kothari**  
5, Jay Neminath  
12 Sanghani Estate  
Gaon Devi Lane, L.B.S Road  
Ghatkopar(West)  
Mumbai - 400 086.  
M- +91 98210 12970

Hon. General Secretary  
**Dr. Janak D. Shah**  
D/502 "Suncrest"  
Accolade Galaxy  
Louis Wadl, Green Road  
Thane(West) - 400 604.

M- +91 98192 25424

*Imm.Past President*  
**Dr. Pragnesh C. Joshi (Surat)**  
M- +91 98241 87892

*Vice Presidents*  
**Dr. Girish A. Modi (Surat)**  
M- +91 98241 40402

**Dr. Rashmikant Upadhyay (Rajkot)**  
M- +91 94262 01281

*Asst.Joint Secretaries*  
**Dr. Priti J. Shah (Mumbai)**  
M- +91 98335 62450

**Dr. Alok Singh Chauhan (Indore)**  
M- +91 98935 44041

**Dr. Pragnesh Vachharajani (Ahmedabad)**  
M- +91 98250 86839

*Executive Comm.Members*  
**Dr. Abhay S. Dikshit (Ahmedabad)**  
M- +91 93270 18200

**Dr. Manish Jain (Indore)**  
M- +91 94250 50838

**Dr. Manilal M. Patel (Jamnagar)**  
M- +91 99043 46750

**Dr. Partha Sarathi Sengupta (Kolkata)**  
M- +91 98309 95992

**Dr.Ramlal B. Lhlla (Kolkata)**  
M- +91 98300 48142

**Dr.Bharat M. Bhatt (Mumbai)**  
M- +91 98200 70517

**Dr. Pragji S. Vaja (Mumbai)**  
M- +91 98204 82375

**Dr. Babulal B. Sutar (Palanpur)**  
M- +91 94267 49265

**Dr. Kumudchandra M. Patel (Rajkot)**  
M- +91 98252 45002

**Dr.Manhar K. Korvadia (Rajkot)**  
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M- +91 98250 57930

**Dr. Yatish Lapsiwala (Surat)**  
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**Dr. Rasiklal B. Shah (Surendranagar)**  
M- +91 92281 31870

**Dr. Nitinkumar S. Shah (Vadodara)**  
M- +91 93762 63163

**Dr. Nimesh J. Desai (Valsad)**  
M- +91 94275 17107

**Co-Opted**

**Dr. Priti Shankar (Banglore)**  
M- +91 94480 11543

**Dr. K. R. Solanki (Bhavnagar)**  
M- +91 97277 79677

**Dr. Hirek K. Mehta (Gandhidham)**  
M- +91 99041 19525

**Dr. Hirek K. Wenta (Gandhidham)**  
M- +91 99041 19525



**Universal Precautions and Suggestions for Family Physicians**  
**General Guidelines in Current Scenario of Covid Pandemic**  
**By Federation of family physicians association of India.**

Anxiety and uncertainty are normal during this time. To some extent this anxiety can be helpful and will keep us alert to take necessary protective precautions. As professionals there will be an inevitable risk of getting infected during work, but can definitely be prevented to a greater extent with right precautions.

**Who should keep clinics open**

- Doctors and paramedical staff above the age of 60 years should take a call to continue practice and avoid going to place of work depending upon individual discretion. This is especially true if there are comorbid diseases at his age.
- Those with underlying medical conditions also should consider avoiding going to the clinic. or take calculated risk depending upon your health status. (Especially immuno-compromised conditions predisposing to infections) like: DM, Chronic Liver diseases, Heart & Kidney disease, Chronic lung conditions like Asthma, COPD, Bronchiectasis, ILD etc., Cancer, on Chemotherapy or Steroid treatment, Pregnant, Seropositive status.
- Restrict OPD time to limited hours and preferably to one session only



## How to organize incoming patients

### Triage on phone:

#### The crucial 1st step in protecting doctors and other Patients.

- All patients must be assessed for possible COVID-19 infection and suspects (as mentioned below). Only if they do not have any relevant history and only if they cannot be advised telephonically (reason for no telephonic advice: New patient, Old case with new symptoms or a patient seen before 6 months), they should be called to clinic by appointment, keeping the reasonable time between each patient as per your discretion to avoid crowding at the clinic.
- If any patient seems to be a Covid suspect, please refer him to the nearby Covid testing center and report to concerned authority as per the laid guidelines. (You may use Arogya Setu app for informing the health authorities )

- **Covid suspect:**

- All symptomatic individuals who have undertaken international travel in the last 14 days or coming from Hot spot or cluster quarantine areas,
- All symptomatic contacts of laboratory confirmed cases or
- All symptomatic healthcare personnel (HCP) or
- All hospitalized patients with severe acute respiratory illness (SARI) (fever AND cough and/or shortness of breath) or
- Asymptomatic direct and high risk contacts of a confirmed case (should be tested once between day 5 and day 14 after contact)
- (Symptomatic refers to fever/cough/shortness of breath.)
- (Direct and high-risk contacts include those who live in the same household with a confirmed case and HCP who examined a confirmed case.)
- But as of now due to contact transmission, consider each and every patient as a potential source of COVID and take necessary precautions.

#### Which patients should be entertained to come to your clinic

- Avoid acutely ill patients
- Avoid routine follow ups



- You may guide the patient on the phone for routine ailments.
- Keep separate time for telephonic consultation; avoid taking calls during OPD time. In fact avoid touching your phone while in the clinic. If done so, sanitize the phone before leaving the clinic.
- Follow tele consultation guidelines given by state medical councils
- You can charge patients for tele-consultation also. This includes advice given on whatsapp to continue the same medicines.
- Discourage walk in patients. Insist on the patient taking appointment before coming. Even they can call from outside of your clinic.
- During this time of cluster formation, it is necessary to ask the area from where the patient is coming.

### **Arrangements in your clinic**

- Keep your consulting room and waiting area maximally ventilated with open doors and windows. Avoid using air conditioning.
- If possible, remove all folding and removable furniture from both the waiting and consulting area. No sitting arrangement should be provided in the waiting area.
- In the consulting room also make an arrangement with a rope or upside down benches so as to keep a distance of at least 3-4 feet from patient.
- Preferably no sitting arrangement for patients also.
- Put minimum things and gadgets on your table and remove as far as possible all the stuff. Keep your table clean.
- Train staff of the clinic on a regular basis.
- Clean your desk, door knob, computer, workstation either yourself or in your presence before starting your session

### **In clinic flow management**

- Waiting area should have a minimum number of patients. Advise them to stay in their vehicles (car or rickshaw) before entering the clinic. They should enter after calling you and only when you allow them. This will reduce exposure of patients to each other.
- Patient should be accompanied by only one relative and each must have a mask on his face. (Be ready to provide one if he does not have and demonstrate the method to wear it).



- No relative to be accompanied in your chamber, unless the patient is a child.
- Let the patient sanitise his hand before entering your consulting room.
- Tell him not to touch anything.
- Preferably, not to carry anything like a bag or reports with him.

### **Examination of a patient**

- Keep minimum contact with the patient... If telemedicine works, there is no need to even examine a patient. This is not a normal time. Ask him to stand at a distance and narrate his complaints. (No touch) and prescribe. If needed you can examine him on your next visit if he does not improve.
- As far as possible keep your palms together (fingers crossed) so as to avoid inadvertent touch of a patient or anything.
- To avoid our hands going to our own nose and face, apply bandage or long vertical tapes on elbow so that flexion is restricted
- Avoid touching the old files too... You can ask the relatives to turn the pages and see the reports, or tell them to send you pics.
- Give today's prescription (NEW one each time) separately in their hands. They can later put in their files.
- If possible give medicines for 2-3 days and do not entertain daily visits.
- While dispensing medicines, prefer no touch techniques.
- Use stethoscope only if it changes the diagnosis or treatment.
- Always maintain a one meter distance between you and patient except for auscultation and examination ...
- Examine the patient with his face turned away... preferably from back ... Do not ever examine throat.
- After each examination sanitize your hands and stethoscope diaphragm and sitting stool also. If a patient needs to be examined on bed, clean it immediately following the examination.
- NO DRESSINGS AND NO INJECTIONS.
- Measuring blood pressure only when indicated... digital blood pressure better... pulse oximeter to be sanitized after every patient. Take blood pressure in a non-dominant arm.
- Don't touch the currency given by the patients ...keep a box on the counter, ask patients to drop the notes into the box. Keep a separate arrangement for



returning the change, you can count the currency after 3 days. You may encourage digital payment through paytm or like.

### **Personal Precautions**

**(Especially before leaving from your home for practice)**

- Never leave for the clinic without a proper meal.
- Use only one and same pen and mobile; and water bottle (disposable better)
- Avoid wearing belts, watch, rings, bangles or dangling earrings. Avoid keeping a wallet too.
- Hairs tied and cover your head with a cap.
- Empty bowel and bladder before you wear your PPE.
- Wear footwear which covers your feet fully. Plastic or rubber are easy to disinfect.

### **Cleaning agents and disinfectants:**

1. 1% Sodium Hypochlorite can be used as a disinfectant for cleaning and disinfection. We can dilute the bleach liquid. We can even mop floors with this
2. The solution should be prepared fresh.
3. Leaving the solution for a contact time of at least 10 minutes is recommended.
4. Alcohol (e.g. isopropyl 70% or ethyl alcohol 70%) can be used to wipe down surfaces where the use of bleach is not suitable, e.g. metals.

### **Use of Mask**

- For routine OPD surgical mask is fine but N 95 is preferred
- N95 mask can be reused. Number the mask with days, change daily and put the used mask in a plastic box or paper bag in the sun. The mask can be used after 4 days unless it is damp, wet, torn or exposed to a suspected patient of Covid 19. It can be used for maximum five times, and then should be discarded.

### **Minimum recommended PPE**

- You do not need full PPE in OPD.
- MASK (TRIPLE LAYER SURGICAL MASK OR N95-Preferred)



- EYE PROTECTION OR FACE SHIELD
- CAP
- Full sleeves Apron (Keep it exclusively for your clinic)
- GLOVES preferably double.

### **Before leaving your clinic**

- Remove mask and PPE only after you finish your duty...never touch the face ... avoid using the toilet or drinking water...keep OPD time short for that.
- Dispose your PPE properly.
- Wash your hands thoroughly
- Decontaminate mobile, spectacles, purse and table after each session. (You can use spirit swabs)



### **While going back home**

- Ring up home when you start from the clinic. Clean car handles and steering.
- Remember you might be immune, but your family members may not be, especially children and elderly. So take care for them also.
- Follow the steps as shown in the picture.
- Remember not to touch anything or anybody before taking a bath.

### **Take care of yourself**

- Remember for the world you are only one person, but for your family you are the whole world, so take care of yourself. You need to be your first priority.
- Patients can always replace doctor, but there is no replacement for your family.
- Never neglect the slightest symptoms and never self-medicate.
- Take care of your health by adequate sleep and rest, spirituality, relaxation, meditation, proper and timely diet, recreational activities etc.
- Spend never before quality time with friends and family.
- Take care of your medicines and associated conditions especially diabetes.

### **REMEMBER**

If you don't come out of this lockdown with a new skill, more knowledge and better health and fitness; you never lacked time, you lacked discipline.

### **Few Medical Tips**

During next 1 to 2 months if you are advising on telephone, remember following medical suggestions:

1. If a patient has fever without respiratory symptoms, suggest taking enough fluids.
2. At the slightest doubt of hypovolemia (diarrhea, vomiting, low appetite) or infection, suggest to withhold NSAID's, ACE, ARB and SGLT 2 Inhibitors for a short period.



3. Immediately record any advice given to patients by any media other than in person consultation with time and contact number and advice. The NEW guidelines suggest that the RMP MUST keep record of:
  - a. the time of advice given,
  - b. platform on which advice given,
  - c. name of the person to whom the advice given and
  - d. the content of advice given.

You may take a screenshot of the phone details (will show the time , date and phone number) or a screenshot of social media

4. It is very important to record and document the advice given for reference and also for Corona reference

**Courtesy:**

Various social media messages

Malad Medical Association

And other unknown authors who have contributed in some way.

**Complied by Team Ahmedabad Family Physician Association**

Dr.Jaswantsinh Darbar

Dr.Dhiren Mehta Dr.Kamlesh Lala

Dr.Praghesh Vachharajani

Special inputs and Guidance: Dr. Urman Dhruv,Consultant Physician and Diabetologist.Ahmedabad



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**PROTOCOLS WHEN ENTERING YOUR HOME**  
**FIGHTING COVID-19**

- When you come home try not to touch anything.**
- Remove your shoes.**
- Disinfect your pet's paws if you took them for walk.**
- Remove your clothes and place them in a bag to be washed.**  
Use bleach and a hot washing machine cycle (over 60 degrees).
- Leave your bag, purse, wallet, keys, etc. in box at the entry of your home.**
- Have a shower. If you can't, wash all exposed areas**  
Hands, wrists, arms, neck, nails, etc.
- Wash your mobile phone and glasses with hot soapy water or alcohol (disinfectant)**
- Clean with bleach all the surfaces of whatever you brought from outside before storing it.**  
Prepare 20 ml of bleach per 1 litre of water solution. Don't forget to use gloves
- Carefully remove and dispose of your gloves then wash your hands**
- Remember it is not possible to carry out complete disinfection, the goal is to minimise the risk.**