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COVID-19 prevention and control guidelines for places of cultural interest.



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COVID-19 brief factsheet

WHAT IS COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus. In the acronym, CO stands for corona (crown in Latin) , VI stands for virus, and D for disease. The virus that is responsible for COVID-19 is novel one, but it belongs to the same family of SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) and of some types of common cold.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF COVID-19?

COVID-19 symptoms include fever, cough and shortness-of-breath. In the most severe cases, the infection can cause pneumonia or breathing difficulties. In rare cases, the disease can be lethal. These symptoms are similar to the ones brought by flu or common cold, diseases that are far more frequent in the population; therefore, a definitive diagnosis of COVID-19 can only be formulated with a laboratory test.

HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?

The virus can be transmitted directly from one infect person to another one through the droplets emitted by coughing and sneezing. It can also be indirectly transmitted by touching contaminated surfaces and then touching the face (e.g. eyes, nose and mouth) with the hands. The COVID-19 virus can survive on surfaces for several days, but even simple detergents can kill it.



WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

Since COVID-19 is a novel virus, we are discovering day by day how it affects people. The evidence so far indicates that older people and people affected by chronic medical conditions such as diabetes or cardiac diseases seem more at risk of developing severe symptoms. We are still learning what are the effects of the virus on children. Like adults, they can be infected, but so far there are few known COVID-19 cases in children. The virus can be lethal, but so far most of the deaths occurred in older or fragile people and in people with pre-existing medical conditions (e. g. cancer patients).



HOW COVID-19 CAN BE TREATED?

Currently there is neither a vaccine nor a specific cure available for COVID-19. Most of the symptoms, however, can be treated by physicians and healthcare operators, and early provision of care can reduce the risks associated with the disease. Several drugs for treating COVID-19 are currently being tested in clinical trials around the world.

Why a guideline for cultural places?

Protection from COVID-19 within cultural places and in educational contexts is very important. We must prevent the possible spread of the infection using appropriate precautions, while trying, at the same time, to ease the flow of visitors and the pleasure of the opportunities offered by our extraordinary artistic and cultural heritage.

Cultural places such as museums, archaeological sites and parks should continue to be hospitable and interesting environments, even if partially transformed in their functions in the context of the COVID-19 epidemic.

A guideline including organizational and behavioural recommendations is therefore a necessary tool to assure the safety of both the personnel providing services in museums and cultural sites, and the visitors and the users of these services and places.

This guideline wants to provide easily accessible knowledge, steering messages and useful considerations to engage museum administrators, professional cultural guides, young, adult and older visitors and persons with disabilities in health promotion activities.

Actions to slow-down or prevent COVID-19 spread.

As in the case of other respiratory infections, such as flu or common cold, public health measures are essential to slow-down the diffusion of the disease.

Public health measures are preventive, daily actions including:

Staying at home if feeling sick.

Covering the mouth and the nose with a tissue (or the flexed elbow) when coughing or sneezing, and immediately disposing of the used tissue.

Using protective face masks where recommended.

Washing hands often with water and soap or alcohol-based solutions.

Cleaning often surfaces and frequently touched objects **with disinfectant detergents**.

When providing services to the public inside a museum, one must take into consideration both aspects related to the personnel providing services, as well as visitors and cultural services users.

Recommendations for the personnel providing services to the public in museums.

Following some basic principles can help to keep personnel and visitors safe, and to avoid the spread of the disease.

- a. All the museum operators, and the staff in general, should stay at home if they present symptoms.
- b. All the museum operators, and the staff in general, should frequently wash their hands with soap and water, alcohol-based solution or hand sanitizer.
- c. All the museum operators, and the staff in general, should maintain a social distance of at least 2 meters.
- d. All the museum operators, and the staff in general, should avoid the promiscuous use of objects.
- e. Facial masks should be worn to reduce the emission of droplets potentially carrying the virus, in conjunction with other preventive measures (physical distance, respiratory and hands hygiene).
- f. All the environments should be cleaned and disinfected every day, and special attention should be placed in cleaning surfaces that are touched by many persons (railings and bannisters, tables, handles, equipment).

g. Hand washing basins with water and soap, or alcohol-based disinfectant dispensers should be available in every room, at entrances and exits, near cafeterias and in restrooms.

h. Trash cans should be available in all rooms and should be frequently emptied.

i. Restrooms should be repeatedly sanitized multiple times during the day.

j. The work places most exposed to the risk of contagion should be identified beforehand and considered in specific safety protocols.

k. In the commercial spaces in which object are displayed for purchase (bookshop) disposable gloves should be made available.

l. The simultaneous presence of large groups of visitors should be avoided.

m. The maximum number of persons allowed in each space should be set to allow the respect of social distance in order limit contagion.

n. The use of elevators should be allowed only in conditions of strict necessity (e.g. person with disabilities)

o. Whenever possible, all the doors between the rooms and all the windows should be kept open, compatibly with the micro-climatic environmental requirements for the preservation of artworks.

p. The procedures to provide assistance to staff or visitors in case of sickness should be appropriately defined (the availability of disposable gloves and of at least an FFP2 mask with filter should be assured, to allow the safe provision of close-contact assistance to the visitor in need).

q. The list of emergency contacts should be prepared in advance, and shared with the local health care providers.

r. The information on COVID-19 and on the measures to prevent contagion in cultural places should be shared with all the staff.

s. The information on COVID-19 and on the measures to prevent contagions in cultural places should be appropriately provided to all the visitors entering the site, and diffused from multiple positions along the visitors' path.

t. The staff should be able to provide the visitors with the answers to all the eventual doubts and questions they might have on the preventive measures put in place.

Recommendations for cultural places visitors and museum users.

After a disease outbreak, in the attempt to return to normalcy, it is always essential to keep paying attention to following the appropriate behavioural norms. More specifically, in visiting museums and other cultural places it is recommended to:

- a. Seek information on the behavioural guidelines at the entrance and from reliable sources (brochure, information desk, posters).
- b. Protect yourself and others by maintaining a safety social distance of at least 2 meters.
- c. Wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds, with water and soap, alcohol-based solutions or hand sanitizer.
- d. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, mouth and your face in general with your hands.
- e. Wear face masks to reduce the emission of droplets, in conjunction with the other preventive measures (social distancing, hands hygiene).



f. Avoid sharing with others food and beverages, cups, glasses and forks.

g. Cover your mouth and nose with a flexed elbow or a disposable tissue when coughing and/or sneezing (and immediately dispose of the tissue).

h. Avoid, whenever possible, to touch common surfaces (tables, bannisters, handles) and do not touch objects on display.

i. Share prevention rules with others.

j. Promptly inform the museum staff if you are not feeling well.

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

To promote the adoption of organizational and behavioural measures to limit the diffusion of COVID-19, and allow safe operations within cultural places such as museums, archaeological sites and parks.

VALIDITY

The content of this document is valid as long as the national or local COVID-19 emergency conditions remain, and anyway until further notice from the relevant institutions.

TO KNOW MORE

Further, in-depth information about the Covid-19 epidemic are available on the Minister of Health website http://www.salute.gov.it/nuovocoronavirus?gclid=EAlaIQobChMIrtfAxcvx6AIVF8-yCh1S5QLfEAAAYASAAEgLBEPD_BwE

The guidelines for preventing contagion were prepared by healthcare expert affiliated to Fondazione Italia in Salute.

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