

## **Guidance for Management of Household Waste of Covid-19 positive Patients and Contacts (A person with suspected or symptomatic laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 or in mandatory quarantine)**

The current pandemic of the covid-19 raises questions on the management of domestic waste in households of covid-19 positive patients, contacts and patients under investigation or in mandatory quarantine.

### **Introduction - transmission of COVID-19**

COVID-19 virus is transmitted via the respiratory route and direct contact. Respiratory droplets are generated when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Therefore, any person in close contact with someone who has respiratory symptoms (for example, sneezing, coughing) or fever or shortness of breath is at risk of being exposed to potentially infective respiratory droplets. Droplets may also land on surfaces where the virus can remain viable, so that objects handled by an infected individual can serve as a source of transmission (contact transmission).

Heat, high or low pH, sunlight and common disinfectants (such as chlorine) all facilitate viral die off<sup>i</sup>. It is not certain how long the virus that causes COVID-19 survives on surfaces, but it seems likely to behave like other coronaviruses. A recent review of the survival of human coronaviruses on surfaces found large variability, ranging from 2 hours to 9 days<sup>ii</sup>. The survival time depends on a number of factors, including the type of surface, temperature, relative humidity and specific strain of the virus. The same review also found that effective inactivation could be achieved within 1 minute using common disinfectants, such as 70% ethanol or sodium hypochlorite.

This document aims to provide guidance to people with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 who are able to receive care at home, and to their contacts such as household members and/or caregivers, or persons in obligatory quarantine regarding the disposal of domestic waste.

### **General Guidance**

General guidelines published by the Public Health Authorities provide general guidelines on how to limit the spread of COVID-19. These must be scrupulously observed when handling domestic waste in households of people with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 or in obligatory quarantine who are receive care at home, and their contacts:

- Hand hygiene is extremely important especially after handling waste. Cleaning hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub containing 70% ethanol should be performed according to the instructions
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- If you become sick with respiratory symptoms like fever and cough, stay away from work, school or other people.
- Cover nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing and sneezing, then immediately dispose of soiled tissues in a lined trash container.
- If using personal protective equipment, follow appropriate procedures during removal. Place all used gloves, facemasks and other contaminated items in a lined container before disposing of them with other household waste. Clean your hands (with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer) immediately after handling these items.

## **Management of waste in residences contaminated or potentially contaminated with COVID-19**

- **Households where infected people reside, should not separate waste. All waste is to be considered as “mixed” waste and disposed in line with the recommendations below. There should be NO separation of organic, recyclable or glass waste.**
- All personal waste (including masks and tissues) has to be collected in small portions (not more than three-quarters full) in tear-resistant plastic garbage bags and tied firmly after filling.
- This plastic bag should then be placed in a second plastic bag and tied before being placed in a waste container.
- Keep bag with residual waste and organic waste for a minimum of 72 hours (to minimize the risks of survival of the virus in the waste) in rooms not accessible to other people and animals (if necessary, properly packed on the balcony).
- The garbage bags are then to be disposed of in the respective available waste collection containers or collected as usual, when “mixed” waste is collected.
- Door-to-door waste collection remains the mode of waste collection that must be favoured first, to avoid excessive movement of persons (and thus person-to-person contact) to dispose of their waste by other means.
- If the collection of waste is via drop-off stations (bring banks, skips, buried containers, etc.), the relative waste bag should be conveyed to the collection container for “mixed” waste by a non-infected contact at a time when there is the least possibility of meeting other users of the drop-off station.

## **Municipal waste generated by households with COVID19 positive people in isolation or people in obligatory quarantine**

- All waste is classified as infectious medical waste (hazardous).
- The management procedures should comply with by law regulation for such waste stream (i.e. operations run by specialized companies, collection using standardized bags, sterilization, specialized treatment plants, etc.).
- In order to guarantee the collection services, the procedures for a safe municipal waste management are the following:
  - Separation of waste streams at source not carried out - all the waste fractions are collected as residual waste;
  - The waste has to be collected in a first bag and then in a second bag (or more, accordingly to the mechanical properties of the second bag) before putting the bag outside the house for collection on a daily basis;
  - If possible, use a bin or container with a pedal for the waste bags;
  - The bags have to be tied (with string or adhesive tape) using single use gloves;
  - Do not press the bags with hands;
  - Do not allow pets getting close to waste bags;
  - Deliver the waste for collection according to the system in place;
  - If the person in isolation/quarantine cannot deliver the waste for the collection service, the local authority must set up a specific service with specialized staff.

## **Municipal waste generated by households without COVID19 positive people in isolation or people in obligatory quarantine**

- Waste separation is maintained.
- Tissues, masks, single use gloves have to be included in the residual waste stream which has to be delivered through 2 bags closed with string or adhesive tape.

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<sup>i</sup> WHO Water, sanitation, hygiene and waste management for the COVID-19 virus - Technical brief. 3 March 2020

<sup>ii</sup> Kampf G, Todt D, Pfaender S, Steinmann E. Persistence of coronaviruses on inanimate surfaces and their inactivation with biocidal agents. *J Hosp Infect.* 2020;104(3):246–51. doi:10.1016/j.jhin.2020.01.022.

See also: Municipal waste management and covid-19 accessed on <https://www.acrplus.org/en/municipal-waste-management-covid-19> on 20/3/20