

P R E S S R E L E A S E

2 OCTOBER 2021

UPDATES TO PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES FOR MIGRANT WORKERS LIVING IN DORMITORIES

As Singapore moves towards COVID-19 resilience, the Ministry of Health (MOH) has adjusted its prevailing healthcare protocols around the Home Quarantine Order and Home Recovery Scheme for the community. In alignment, the Ministry of Manpower have made corresponding adjustments to our health measures for workers living in the dormitories.

There continues to be strong evidence that fully vaccinated individuals are protected against severe illness. More than 90% of migrant workers in dormitories are vaccinated and are generally young. Of the infected migrant workers, the vast majority had no symptoms. None have been in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and one with a non-Pandemic Special Access Route (PSAR) vaccine needed oxygen supplementation briefly.

With the new adjustments to health measures, we will be able to focus our attention on the symptomatic cases and those who need medical care, while reducing disruption to workers' lives and work.

2 Adjustments will be made in three key areas:

- a. **Testing:** We will increase the use of Fast and Easy Tests such as Antigen Rapid Tests (ARTs) to make testing more convenient. Regular testing remains the cornerstone of our efforts to detect and isolate cases early. Since 13 September 2021, we have introduced regular ART for workers on top of their regular Rostered Routine Testing (RRT) cycles. Moving forward, we will progressively shift towards the use of only ART tests for RRT. Dormitory residents with acute respiratory illness (ARI) symptoms should continue to report sick at one of the regional medical centres and a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test will be administered if clinically indicated.
- b. **Tracing:** We will tighten contact tracing rings to focus on those who are most at risk of being exposed to the virus. Previously, entire blocks or sections within blocks may be quarantined as a precautionary measure when new cases are detected. With dormitories now more resilient, quarantine orders (QO) will only be issued to roommates of confirmed cases on PCR test. The quarantine period will also be reduced from 14 days to 10 days from the date of last exposure to the confirmed case, with workers to self-administer ART from Day 11 to Day 14.

The revised policy for QOs will reduce the extent and duration of work disruptions while protecting public health. However, wider quarantine rings may still be applied to contain the spread of COVID-19 in the event of new large clusters.

Other residents in the dormitory who are close contacts of a PCR positive resident may be issued with either a Health Risk Warning (HRW) or Health Risk Alert (HRA) via TraceTogether (TT) and follow MOH's prevailing protocol.

- c. **Isolating:** We will allow fully vaccinated workers who tested positive for COVID-19 and have no symptoms to isolate and recover in a dedicated facility within the dormitories for up to 10 days. These asymptomatic vaccinated workers will have access to thermometers, oximeters for monitoring and telemedicine support. These workers will be required to take an ART test after Day 3 and will be discharged from the recovery facilities upon receiving a negative ART result. Symptomatic workers will be given a confirmatory PCR test and conveyed to community care facilities (CCF) or hospitals depending on their condition. This will ensure better prioritisation of healthcare capacity for treating serious cases, as well as for other healthcare needs.

3 These changes will help us lay the foundation for a more COVID-19 resilient nation. We seek the support of all our stakeholders, including our migrant workers, employers, dormitory operators and the general public, to keep our workers safe as we move into a new normal.

End of Release

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