

Issued:
י"ט אדר ה'תש"פ
15 March, 2020
At 12:00pm

פסק הלכה
Halachic Ruling

Revision 3 – supersedes all previous advice.

Dear community שיחיו,

Following a case of confirmed COVID-19 in the Yeshivah Centre community, and further suspected cases, we present the following formal Psak Halacha (Halachic ruling) relevant to the present circumstances. The absolute prohibition of putting oneself in danger, or endangering others, cannot be overemphasised. Halacha **requires us** to make decisions based on the risk of preventing **even just one potential fatality**. It is an absolute Halachic imperative that one gives this the proper attention it deserves.

If you fall under any of the three categories mentioned below, it is an **Issur Gomur (absolute prohibition)** to attend **any** Minyan, use a community Mikvah, or engage in any other behaviour that puts others at risk:

1. Confirmed cases of COVID-19.
2. Suspected cases of COVID-19. This refers to a person presenting flu-like symptoms (cough, runny nose, fever, sore throat, diarrhoea etc) who has not received clearance from a doctor ruling out COVID-19.
3. Close Contact – This is defined as a person who has been notified by the DHHS that they are considered a “Close Contact” with COVID-19. This category is being intensively managed by the DHHS directly, and they will notify you directly if you fall in this category.

Casual Contact – The DHHS has introduced this tier, which is defined as a person who has spent at least 15 minutes within 1.5 metres of a confirmed case of COVID-19, but who is not demonstrating symptoms. The DHHS has not **mandated** any hard rules, but has **suggested** and **recommended** that casual contacts not congregate indoors in large groups of close proximity. At present, there is no need to avoid small gatherings or non-congregate areas (such as shopping venues at low-peak times).

In addition to the above, we make the following recommendations for Minyanim. We emphasise that many of the following recommendations are **not** on the direct instructions of the DHHS, but are still common-sense and encouraged:

1. Not to attend Minyanim of **greater than 20 people** – outdoors if the weather cooperates, or indoors in a non-cramped well-ventilated space.
2. Maintain some distance from other people if indoors for more than 15 minutes.
3. The elderly and those with compromised immune systems must not attend all.
4. Children under Bar Mitzvah should stay home, so as not to take the place of a Bar Mitzvah davening with a Minyan.

5. If the Minyan is taking place in someone's home, do not linger in any other part of their house, or use their restroom facilities. Bring your own Siddur and Chumash, and do not use those of your host.
6. Please ensure that you inform your host if you are a casual-contact or recently arrived within the last 14 days (whether international or domestic). Respect and follow the instructions of your host regarding whether casual-contacts or travellers may attend that Minyan.
7. Do not directly kiss the Sefer Torah, Mezuzos or Siddurim.
8. At Aleinu, spit into a tissue, or not at all.
9. Sanitise your hands properly.
10. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when sneezing and/or coughing.

Our recommendation remains for no one to attend Shabbos meals elsewhere or invite others, wherever possible, given the nature of its prolonged contact.

Mikvah facilities for men must remain closed.

Please be aware that this situation is evolving, and this Psak Halacha may be updated in the future.

It is now time to come together in a meaningful way, even if this can't necessarily mean physical closeness. Let us increase in helping others, give more Tzedakah and say more Tehillim.

ויתקיים בנו מקרא שכתוב "כל המחלה ... לא אשים עליך כי אני ה' רפאך"
With much blessing for health and happiness for all,

Signed:

Rabbi Chaim Tzvi Groner

Rabbi Mordechai Gutnick

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

Rabbi Moshe Kahn

Rabbi Shmuel Lesches

קצת מקורות:

ראה יו"ד סי' קט"ז סעיף ה': "וכן יזהר מכל דברים המביאים לידי סכנה, כי סכנתא חמירא מאיסורא ויש לחוש יותר לספק סכנה מלספק איסור", ע"ש ובנו"כ שם, וכ"ה בהלכות שמירת גוף ונפש לאדמוה"ז. ולענין מגפת דבר המוזכר שם ראה פת"ש שם בשם הרשב"ש סי' קצ"ה, וראה שו"ת חו"י סי' קצ"ז, וראה גם יו"ד סוף סי' שע"ד, ולהעיר קצת מערוה"ש שם. וראה גם מכתבי הגרעק"א בעת המגיפה בשנת תקצ"א. וראה גם ספר החסידים סי' תרע"ג.