

# UPDATES ON LOCAL SITUATION, BORDER MEASURES AND SHIFT TO HEIGHTENED ALERT TO MINIMISE TRANSMISSION

## 4TH MAY 2021

The Multi-Ministry Taskforce (MTF) has been closely monitoring the local and global COVID-19 situation. Several countries continue to experience a resurgence of cases and the emergence of new virus variants which have also been found in Singapore. The number of locally transmitted COVID-19 cases and unlinked community cases has also continued to increase, signalling undetected community transmissions that could rapidly escalate into another major outbreak if not adequately contained in a timely manner. We will be taking decisive action to curb the COVID-19 infections in Singapore.

2. We will further tighten border measures to manage the risk of importation from travellers and onward local transmission. From **7 May 2021, 2359 hours**, all new travellers arriving from higher risk countries/regions will be subject to 21-day Stay-Home Notice (SHN) at dedicated SHN facilities.
3. We will also be tightening safe management measures to reduce the risk of community spread in this period of heightened alert. In the upcoming weeks, it is of utmost importance that everyone be extra vigilant and take all necessary precautions against the spread of COVID-19 infections in Singapore.

### Report of Virus Variants Identified in Singapore

4. Within the community in the past week, we have identified 60 new cases. As of 3 May 2021, we have detected eight local cases with the B.1.351 (S. African) variant, seven local cases with the B.1.1.7 (UK) variant, seven local cases with B.1.617.2 (Indian) variant, three local cases with P1 (Brazilian) variant, three local cases with B.1.617.1 (Indian) variant, and one local case with B.1.525 (UK2) variant. In addition, there were four re-infection cases RI16, RI17, RI18 and RI20 with the B.1.351 (S. African) variant [1].
5. Of note, seven cases in three local clusters have the B.1.617.2 (Indian) variant, but the viruses in each cluster are phylogenetically distinct, suggesting that the clusters are not linked to one another. Five cases 62541, 62557, 62561, 62567, and 62568 are part of the cluster at Tan Tock Seng Hospital. Case 62517 of the Case 62517 cluster is an Immigration & Checkpoints Authority (ICA) officer deployed at Changi Airport Terminal 1. Case 62553 of the Case 62553 cluster is a cleaner deployed at a community care facility at Tuas South. All necessary public health actions have been taken promptly to isolate and ringfence all cases. Given the possible increased transmissibility of the new virus variants, it is necessary to take tighter measures reflective of the heightened alert to mitigate the risk of further transmission in Singapore.

### Reviewing Border Measures to Manage Risks

6. Since **1 May 2021, 2359 hours**, to manage the increased risks of community spread, all long-term pass holders and short-term visitors with recent travel history (including transit) to Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka within the last 14 days are not allowed entry into Singapore, or transit through Singapore [2]. In addition, since **2 May 2021, 2359 hours**, travellers with recent travel history to Thailand are required to serve their 14-day SHN at dedicated SHN facilities. In view of the worsening situation globally, we will further tighten our border measures for travellers with recent travel history to higher risk countries/regions, and reduce entry approvals for non-Singapore Citizens/ Permanent Residents with immediate effect.

#### (A) Extending Consecutive Travel History from 14 to 21 Days

7. From **7 May 2021, 2359 hours**, prevailing border measures that will apply to incoming travellers will be determined based on the travellers' recent travel history in the past consecutive 21 days to countries/ regions, instead of the existing assessed travel history period of 14 days [3]. This will aid the detection of any spread among any groups of travellers at pre-departure tests.

#### (B) Reviewing the Length of the SHN Duration from 14 to 21 Days

8. From **7 May 2021, 2359 hours**, the following changes to the SHN duration will be implemented:
  - a. All travellers with recent travel history to higher risk countries/regions[4], and who are arriving from **7 May 2021, 2359 hours**, will be required to serve 21-day SHN at dedicated SHN facilities. Travellers who are currently serving 14-day SHN and have yet to complete their SHN by **7 May 2021, 2359 hours**, will be required to serve an additional 7-days at their current SHN location to minimise movement and risk of transmission.
  - b. Travellers who have stayed in **Fiji and Vietnam** in the last 14 days before arrival in Singapore were previously allowed to opt out of serving 14-day SHN at dedicated SHN facilities. **From 7 May 2021, 2359 hours, travellers who have stayed in these countries in the past consecutive 21 days before arrival in Singapore will be subjected to 21-day SHN at dedicated SHN facilities, with the option to serve the last 7 days at their place of residence.** Those who have yet to complete their 14-day SHN by **7 May 2021, 2359 hours** can complete their remaining 14-day SHN at their current SHN location, and serve their additional 7-days at their place of residence, instead of at dedicated SHN facilities.

c. Travellers from the UK, South Africa, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka who are currently required to serve 21-day SHN will be required to serve the full duration of the SHN at dedicated SHN facilities. Travellers who have yet to complete their 21-day SHN by **7 May 2021, 2359 hours**, will have to complete their 21-day SHN at their current SHN location to minimise movement and risk of transmission.

d. Travellers serving 21-day SHN will undergo COVID-19 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests on-arrival[5], on Day 14 of their SHN, and before the end of their 21-day SHN period.

### Heightened Alert in the Fight Against COVID-19

9. On 30 April 2021, MTF had announced additional community measures that would be implemented from 1 May through 14 May 2021 (unless otherwise stated). To manage the evolving community situation, we will step up efforts to keep the community safe and break the chains of transmission by reducing interactions amongst social circles and at the workplace. Activities that involve large gatherings will also be calibrated to ensure that the risk of transmission at such events are mitigated.

10. The following additional measures will take effect from **8 May** through **30 May 2021**. In the next few days before the measures take effect, we also encourage all to practise the following safe management measures to keep our community safe. A summary of all measures applicable from 1 May through 30 May 2021 is summarised in [Annex B \(https://www.moh.gov.sg/docs/librariesprovider5/default-document-library/annex-bd697c42bebc43f7a00b4652a817b64e.pdf?sfvrsn=7b5c8792\\_0\)](https://www.moh.gov.sg/docs/librariesprovider5/default-document-library/annex-bd697c42bebc43f7a00b4652a817b64e.pdf?sfvrsn=7b5c8792_0).

#### A) Reducing Interactions amongst Social Circles

11. The current permissible group size of up to 8 persons will be reduced to up to 5 persons. As earlier announced on 30 April 2021, individuals are advised to keep to 2 or less social gatherings per day, whether visiting another household or meeting with friends/ family members in a public place. The cap of 8 distinct visitors per household per day will also be reduced to 5 distinct visitors per household per day.

#### B) Workplace Measures

12. Today, up to 75% of employees who are able to work-from-home are allowed to return to the workplace. This will be tightened from **8 May** through **30 May 2021**. Employers must ensure that no more than 50% of employees who are able to work from home return to the workplace at any time. Employers should continue to stagger start times of employees who need to return to the workplace, and implement flexible working hours. Social gatherings at the workplace should be avoided. However, if they cannot be avoided (e.g. during meal breaks), the gatherings are subject to the revised group size of 5 persons. Employers must exercise heightened vigilance at the workplace. These measures will lower transmission risks by reducing overall footfall and interactions at common spaces at or near the workplace, and in public places, including public transport.

#### C) Reduction of Activity and Event Sizes and Pre-Event Testing Requirements

13. To minimise the likelihood of large cluster formations, we will reduce event sizes and/or lower the event size caps beyond which pre-event testing[6] is required. More details on pre-event testing can be found on the [MOH \(https://www.moh.gov.sg/covid-19/pet\)](https://www.moh.gov.sg/covid-19/pet) website.

a. 14. Congregational and other worship services. As a new requirement, pre-event testing will be required if there are more than 100 attendees at any one time, capped at 250 attendees. To further reduce the risks of transmission, congregational singing will be suspended in places of worship to manage any risks of spread.

b. Weddings. Marriage solemnisations may proceed with up to 250 attendees in total (including the wedding couple, excluding the Licensed Solemniser and vendors) for the entire event, in zones of up to 50 attendees. Pre-event testing will be required for the wedding couple for solemnisations involving more than 50 attendees. Similarly, wedding receptions may proceed with up to 250 attendees in total (including the wedding couple, excluding vendors) for the entire event, in zones or timeslots of up to 50 attendees each. Due to the higher risk at receptions where people are unmasked while enjoying their meals and come into close and prolonged contact mingling with one another, pre-event testing for all attendees (including the wedding couple) will be required for wedding receptions involving more than 50 attendees.

c. Funerals. Attendees at the day of the burial/ cremation will be limited to no more than 30 persons, down from 50 persons currently. The cap for other days of the wake remains at 30 attendees at any one time. As pre-event testing is not required, attendees are reminded to maintain safe distancing and keep masks on at all times to reduce the risk of spread.

d. Spectator/participation sports events (seated). As a new requirement, all mass participation sports events will be suspended and no spectators will be allowed.

e. Live performances at designated venues, pilot business-to-business events, cinemas. The maximum number of attendees allowed at live performances and pilot business-to-business events will be reduced from 750 to 250. Pre-event testing will be required for all attendees of these events if there are more than 100 attendees. Similarly, cinema attendances will be reduced to 100 attendees, with the potential to increase to 250 attendees with the additional requirement of pre-event testing.

f. Museums and Public Libraries. Operating capacity will be reduced from 65% to 50%.

g. Attractions and shows. All attractions that have received MTI's prior approval will be permitted to operate at 50% operating capacity, a reduction from 65%. The maximum number of attendees allowed at the indoor and outdoor shows at these attractions will be reduced to 100. Pre-event testing is not required.

h. Tours. The maximum tour size offered by tour operators and tourist guides will be reduced from 50 attendees to 20 attendees.

#### (D) Closure of Higher-risk Settings

14. Based on overseas and local experience, higher-risk settings such as indoor gymnasiums and indoor fitness studios have a tendency to be hotspots for COVID-19 transmission. These settings and the associated activities are where there is a high density of people who are unmasked and in close proximity with one another, often for prolonged periods.

15. During the next few weeks of heightened alert, to reduce the risks of community transmission, we will close indoor gymnasiums and indoor fitness/health studios. These are small enclosed spaces where people are frequently unmasked while exercising, and in close proximity with many other unmasked people. Outdoor organised exercise programmes/classes may still continue, subject to a class size of 30 attendees in total, with safe distancing measures. This includes group sizes of up to 5 persons and a 3 metre distance between each group.

16. We will remain vigilant and continue to monitor other higher-risk settings and activities such as indoor sports halls and personalised services such as massages, spas, and facials. If the community cases situation does not improve, we will consider taking further actions on these higher-risk settings and activities.

#### **TraceTogether-only Safe Entry (TT-only SE) brought forward to 17 May 2021**

17. It was previously announced that TT-only SE was slated to be implemented from **1 June 2021** across all venues that experience a higher throughput of visitors and/or where persons are likely to be in close proximity for prolonged periods. The implementation of TT-only SE will now be brought forward to **17 May 2021**. From **17 May 2021**, scanning of SE-QR codes with the phone camera and Singpass App will be discontinued. To ease the transition, ID check-ins will be retained until **31 May 2021**.

#### **SafeEntry Gateway required to be deployed at more venues from 15 June 2021**

18. It was also previously announced that SafeEntry Gateway devices would be required to be deployed at selected venues with high visitorship, such as malls, large standalone retail stores, and cinemas, beginning from **19 April 2021**. The requirement to deploy SafeEntry Gateway devices will be extended to more public-facing venues where people are likely to be in contact for prolonged periods, such as hotels, dine-in F&B outlets, and sports and fitness centres. This will facilitate a more seamless check-in experience and ensure that TT tokens are functioning. These venues will be required to deploy the SafeEntry Gateway by **15 June 2021**. The full list of venues required to deploy the SafeEntry Gateway can be found on the [SafeEntry \(https://www.safeentry.gov.sg\)](https://www.safeentry.gov.sg) website.

19. These measures will strengthen the TT and SE Programmes, which are critical digital tools to facilitate contact tracing and bring down community spread. To date, more than 90% of the population have either downloaded the TT App and/or collected the TT token. By maximising TT coverage and active TT usage, we can facilitate quick detection and ringfencing of local cases and their close contacts, and minimise further spread to the community.

#### **Working Together and Keeping Safe**

20. Our recent cases show that we must continue to be vigilant in our fight against COVID-19. We must continue to observe all the safe management measures, practise good hygiene, and see a doctor and be tested when sick. Vaccination also remains a key enabler to reduce the risks of community transmission. Vaccination sites continue to remain open during this period subject to safe management measures and we encourage all to continue to be vaccinated when it is offered to you.

21. We seek the cooperation of all Singaporeans to remain unified and disciplined in the fight against COVID-19. Together, we keep our loved ones and community safe.

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH**

**4 MAY 2021**

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[1] A breakdown of the local and imported cases detected with these variants is outlined in [Annex A \(https://www.moh.gov.sg/docs/librariesprovider5/default-document-library/annex-a65c38244a9e142828ce500c88a5a5503.pdf?sfvrsn=cc22c0c5\\_0\)](https://www.moh.gov.sg/docs/librariesprovider5/default-document-library/annex-a65c38244a9e142828ce500c88a5a5503.pdf?sfvrsn=cc22c0c5_0).

[2] This also applied to all those who had obtained prior approval for entry into Singapore.

[3] This excludes bilaterally negotiated travel lanes (e.g. Air Travel Bubble, Reciprocal Green Lane).

[4] As of 4 May 2021, this refers to all countries/regions except Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Mainland China, New Zealand, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao. Please refer to the (<https://safetravel.ica.gov.sg>) Safe Travel Office (<https://safetravel.ica.gov.sg>) Website for updates to the countries/ regions identified.

[5] To expedite the COVID-19 PCR test at the airport, travellers are strongly encouraged to register and pre-pay for their on-arrival COVID-19 PCR test prior to departing for Singapore at <https://safetravel.changiairport.com/>.

[6] Vaccinated individuals can gain entry to events that implement pre-event testing without the need to undergo pre-event testing, by presenting relevant documentation. The maximum number of attendees includes these vaccinated individuals.

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