EASING OF COMMUNITY SMMS AND BORDER MEASURES

24TH MAR 2022

It has been more than a week since the introduction of the Safe Management Measures (SMM) 1-5 framework. This was done with a view of simplifying and streamlining the rules, thus enabling us to ease the SMMs along these five parameters, once there was an improvement in our overall healthcare situation.

- 2. Thanks to the collective efforts of everyone in Singapore, the daily local case numbers and the number of COVID-19 related hospitalisations have declined steadily. While the workload of our healthcare workers remains high with the increase in non-COVID-19 admissions, our overall conditions have improved significantly. We are now in a position to make a significant move to ease our community SMMs, and make further progress towards living with COVID-19.
- 3. In tandem with the easing of community SMMs, we will also facilitate the resumption of travel by transiting to a Vaccinated Travel framework, where all fully vaccinated travellers can enjoy quarantine-free entry into Singapore without the need to enter under specific Vaccinated Travel Lanes (VTLs).
- 4. Even as we move towards normalcy, it is necessary to adequately protect vulnerable segments in our society who are at higher risk of falling severely ill from COVID-19. As such, we have accepted the recommendation by the Expert Committee on COVID-19 Vaccination (EC19V) to offer a second booster dose to persons aged 80 years and above, residents of aged care facilities, as well as medically vulnerable persons with co-morbidities. These groups are most affected by waning vaccine efficacy over time. The second booster dose should be taken five months after receiving their first booster dose.

Updates on the Local Situation

5. Daily case numbers and COVID-19 hospitalisations have continued to decline steadily in the past week. The 7-day moving average of daily case numbers has fallen from around 13,000 to under 10,000. More importantly, the number of hospitalisations has fallen from 1,238 to 951. Incidence of severe illness has also remained low. In the past 28 days, 0.04% and 0.3% of local cases required ICU care or oxygen supplementation respectively.

Updates on Community SMMs

- The SMM 1-5 framework consists of five key parameters: (i) group sizes; (ii) mask-wearing; (iii) workplace requirements; (iv) safe distancing; and (v) capacity limits. As the local situation has improved considerably, we will ease the community SMMs along these five parameters. From **29 March 2022**, we will implement the following adjustments (see <u>Annex A (https://www.moh.gov.sg/docs/librariesprovider5/pressroom/press-releases/mtf-pr-annex-a.pdf? sfvrsn=ddb6539a 0) for more details):</u>
 - a. <u>Group Sizes.</u> The permissible group size for social gatherings will be increased from 5 persons to **10 persons for mask-off activities**. The maximum number of unique visitors per household will also be adjusted from 5 persons at any one time, to **10 persons at any one time**.
 - b. Mask-Wearing. Mask-wearing will continue to be required for indoor settings when people leave their homes, but will be optional in outdoor settings. However, we encourage individuals to wear their masks even when outdoors for personal protection and to protect others, especially in crowded areas. Indoor places refer to all buildings/places with clearly defined entrances/exits, such as office buildings, shopping malls, public transport (i.e. when commuting in trains and buses), and includes hawker centres and coffeeshops. Places which are sheltered but with open access generally, such as Housing Development Board (HDB) void decks, retail block walkways, bus stops, and naturally ventilated bus interchanges will be regarded as outdoor areas. See Annex B (https://www.moh.gov.sg/docs/librariesprovider5/pressroom/press-releases/mtf-pr-annex-b.pdf?sfvrsn=b7c905ab 0) for more examples.
 - c. <u>Workplace Requirements</u>. **Up to 75**% of employees who are able to work from home can now return to the workplace, an increase from the current limit of 50%. We will continue to align the rules for social gatherings in workplaces and other social settings, so long as the general group size and masking rules are adhered to.
 - d. <u>Safe Distancing</u>. Safe distancing continues to be encouraged but will not be required between individuals or groups for mask-on settings. A safe distance of 1 metre will continue to be required for mask-off settings. between individuals or between groups up to the prevailing group size limit. Notwithstanding this, we still need to guard against gatherings of big crowds, even if they have their masks on. Hence, we will continue to impose capacity limits, as described below.
 - e. <u>Capacity Limits</u>. The capacity limit of 50% for large events and settings of more than 1,000 pax¹ will be increased to **75%**. This means that:
 - i. For smaller settings/events with ≤1,000 pax, they can proceed without being subject to any capacity limit.

ii. For larger settings/events with >1,000 pax and that are mask-on², they will be subject to operating within 75% of the capacity limit of the venue. For mask-off events, individuals or groups of individuals up to the prevailing group size will be required to comply with the 1 metre safe distancing requirement.

See <u>Annex C (https://www.moh.gov.sg/docs/librariesprovider5/pressroom/pressreleases/mtf-pr-annex-c.pdf?sfvrsn=fc6c3a48 0)</u> for the list of settings/events covered.

Other Activity-Specific Adjustments

- 7. In line with the above easing under the SMM 1-5 framework, we will also make the following activity-specific adjustments from **29 March 2022**.
- 8. <u>Dine-in at food and beverage (F&B) establishments.</u> In line with the increase in group size, groups of up to 10 fully vaccinated persons will be allowed to dine-in at F&B establishments, including hawker centres and coffee shops, where full vaccination-differentiated SMMs (VDS) checks have been implemented at their entrances. To ease the operational burden for F&B operators, we will allow all F&B establishments to seat smaller groups of up to 5 fully vaccinated persons, without the need for full VDS checks at their entrance. Instead, random spot-checks will be done to ensure that only vaccinated persons are dining-in at these places, and the onus will be on the dining-in individuals to abide by the rules. This will make it easier for the F&B operators who face difficulties in cordoning off their venues and setting up discrete access control points especially hawker centres and coffee-shops.
- 9. <u>Alcohol consumption.</u> The current restriction, in F&B establishments, on the sale and consumption of alcohol after 10.30pm will be lifted.
- 10. <u>Live performances and screening of programmes.</u> Live performances will be allowed to resume at all venues, including F&B establishments. Outdoor live performances and busking³ will also be allowed to resume. Groups that are involved in the performances will have to comply with the prevailing SMM 1-5, i.e. keep to the group size of 10 unmasked persons. We will also lift the restriction on the screening of live broadcast programmes and recorded entertainment in F&B establishments.
- 11. <u>Vocalisation activities</u>. We had previously taken a strong position against group vocalisation activities because of the higher risk of transmission. But we are now in a different situation and can start easing this restriction. Subject to masks being worn throughout the vocalisation activity, we will allow the following activities which involve vocalisation by large groups:
 - a. Congregational singing and chanting;
 - b. Cheering by audiences/spectators/participants at events; and
 - c. Singing in general settings, including in schools.

- 12. <u>Social events and larger-scale social gatherings.</u> Except for marriage solemnisations and wedding receptions, which are key life events, we have held back from allowing larger-scale social gatherings and events such as gala dinners, corporate dinner-and-dance events (D&Ds), birthday celebrations and anniversaries. Given the stabilising local situation and for consistency with other events, we will allow such social events and gatherings to resume. Organisers of these events should still comply the prevailing SMM 1-5. That means there should be no more than 10 persons per table, and safe distancing of 1 m maintained between tables. Participants should also continue to exercise prudence and restraint, and limit their interactions to the same group they are seated with.
- 13. <u>The above changes will all take effect from 29 March 2022.</u> The relevant agencies will provide more details on any further detailed requirements specific to their sectors.
- 14. We are separately looking into the safe resumption of nightlife businesses, comprising bars, pubs, karaoke establishments, discotheques and nightclubs. These are activities with much higher risks of transmission and where there are generally more difficulties complying with the prevailing SMM 1-5. MTI and MHA will provide an update on the re-opening of the sector in the coming weeks.

Supporting Literacy and Learning for Young Children

15. Currently, children aged 6 years and above are required to wear a mask when they leave their homes, while children younger than 6 are strongly encouraged to mask up when there is interaction with others. While this affords young children protection against COVID-19 infection, it may also make it more challenging for them, especially those with listening or learning difficulties, to develop language and literacy skills. In line with the national transition towards COVID-19 resiliency, the Ministry of Education (MOE) and Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) will offer selected groups of teachers and students in schools, preschools and Early Intervention Centres the flexibility to remove their masks during language and literacy lessons to better support children's learning and development needs. These groups include children with hearing loss, speech articulation issues, or learning difficulties such as dyslexia. MOE and ECDA will share details.

Rationalisation of SMMs for Migrant Workers (MWs) living in Dormitories

- 16. The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) will also align the SMMs for MWs living in dormitories with the latest community SMMs.
- 17. In addition, **from 1 April 2022**, vaccinated MWs will no longer need to apply for Exit Passes to visit recreation centres (RCs). Only unvaccinated MWs must continue to apply for Exit Passes and also fulfil their pre-visit ART before visiting the RCs. For community visits, we earlier increased the quota of community visit slots for vaccinated MWs from 3,000 on weekdays, and

6,000 for weekends and public holidays to 15,000 and 30,000 respectively. This quota will remain the same, but there will no longer be a need to do pre-visit ART. To safeguard unvaccinated MWs against infection, they would still not be allowed to visit the community.

Cessation of Rostered Routine Testing (RRT) Regime

- 18. As part of our shift in focus towards protecting the vulnerable and in view of the reduced effectiveness of RRT in containing the Omicron variant given its shorter incubation period and higher transmissibility, we had earlier streamlined RRT to apply only to settings catering to vulnerable groups and selected essential services sectors.
- 19. As the COVID-19 situation eases, we will optimise our testing strategy further. The high vaccination and booster coverage among the sectors still on RRT, and their strict compliance to their specific safe management measures are sufficient to protect the individuals within these sectors, now that we have passed the peak of the Omicron wave. Therefore, **from 29 March 2022**, we will stop RRT for all sectors⁴. With this, the Government subsidies provided for companies on RRT will also end on 29 March 2022. Employers and businesses who wish to impose regular testing at the workplace at their cost may continue to do so. Individuals are still encouraged to self-test when they feel unwell or had recent contact with an infected person, and to follow the necessary health protocols if they test positive. Companies should continue to allow their employees to rest at home from their COVID infection if they test positive, without the need for a medical certificate or recovery memo.

Expanding Protocol 2 to Paediatric COVID-19 Patients aged 12 months to 2 years old

20. We had earlier allowed patients aged 3 to 69 years to recover at home under Protocol 2 regardless of vaccination status, as the vast majority of people in this age group can recover safely on their own. Local clinical data collected during the Omicron wave indicates that most children in the 12 months to 2 years old age group also experience mild symptoms and recover uneventfully in the community. Hence, in consultation with the paediatric specialist community, MOH will now expand the eligible age band. From 25 March 2022, patients aged 12 months to 2 years old will also be managed under Protocol 2 by default, either at home or under the care of their primary care physicians or paediatricians. See Annex D (https://www.moh.gov.sg/docs/librariesprovider5/pressroom/press-releases/mtf-pr-annex-d.pdf? sfvrsn=7f029309_0) for the revised default management of COVID-19 patients across all age groups.

Move to Vaccinated Travel Framework

21. Over the past few months, we have simplified our country/region classification and border measures to pave the way for more Vaccinated Travel. With many countries/regions having passed the peak of their Omicron wave and our local COVID-19 situation stabilising, we are ready to launch

the Vaccinated Travel Framework for all travellers including Short-Term Visitors (STVs). We will classify all countries/regions either under the General Travel or the Restricted Category and accord border measures by individual travellers' vaccination status. All countries/regions will come under the General Travel Category to begin with. There are no countries/regions in the Restricted Category currently.

General Travel Category Border Measures

- 22. From **31 March 2022, 2359 hours**, the border measures for travellers arriving via air or sea checkpoints from countries/regions in the General Travel Category will be as follows:
 - a. All fully vaccinated travellers⁵ and non-fully vaccinated children aged 12 and below⁶ are permitted to enter Singapore. They will not need to apply for entry approvals or take designated VTL transport. They will continue to be subjected to a pre-departure test (PDT) within 2 days before departure for Singapore, but will no longer be required to serve a Stay-Home Notice (SHN) or undergo an unsupervised Antigen Rapid Test (ART) after arriving in Singapore. We will continue to monitor the local and global COVID-19 situations and consider removing the PDT requirement in the coming weeks;
 - b. Non-fully vaccinated Long-Term Pass Holders (LTPHs) and STVs aged 13 and above are generally not allowed to enter Singapore, with the following exceptions (i) LTPHs medically ineligible for vaccines; (ii) LTPHs aged 13 to 17, subject to the appropriate measures⁷ and (iii) LTPHs and STVs with other valid entry approval (e.g. for compassionate reasons). They are required to take a PDT within 2 days before departure for Singapore, undergo a 7-day SHN, and take a PCR test at the end of their SHN period.
- 23. To facilitate Singapore Citizens (SCs), Permanent Residents (PRs), Work Pass Holders and other LTPHs who may face difficulties obtaining valid PDTs within 2 days before returning to Singapore, we have introduced remote supervised ART services by approved licensed providers in Singapore for such travellers arriving from selected countries. Going forward, we will accept Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests, professionally administered ARTs and ARTs supervised by approved licensed providers in Singapore (including remotely supervised ARTs) taken within 2 days before departure for Singapore as valid PDTs. Travellers who wish to use the remotely supervised ART PDT services licensed in Singapore should book their slots early with these providers via their respective websites and bring along approved ART kits from Singapore for their remotely supervised https://go.gov.sg/remote-art-overseas-sq ART. Refer to (https://www.moh.gov.sg/docs/librariesprovider5/covid19 test providers/list-of-approved-artproviders-for-remote-supervised-self-swab-for-overseas-travellers-(23032022).pdf) for a list of approved remotely supervised ART PDT providers, and the travellers and countries/regions that this service applies to.

We are also working towards the full resumption of land travel with Malaysia for fully vaccinated persons. Details on the exact border measures for fully vaccinated travellers entering Singapore via the land borders will be announced jointly with Malaysia.

Restricted Category Border Measures

- 25. In the event of a new variant with potentially significant public health risk, we may reclassify significantly affected countries/regions under the Restricted Category with stringent border measures, such as the need for entry approvals for STVs to enter Singapore. This is to enable us to limit the risk of importing new and potentially dangerous variants if they arise, as well as to buy time for experts to better understand the characteristics of these variants and to develop appropriate public health recommendations.⁸
- See <u>Annex E (https://www.moh.gov.sg/docs/librariesprovider5/pressroom/press-releases/mtf-pr-annex-e.pdf?sfvrsn=58b5405_0)</u> for details on the border measures for travellers arriving from **31 March 2022**, **2359** hours. The latest border requirements can be found on the SafeTravel website (https://safetravel.ica.gov.sg/). Travellers are strongly advised to visit the website to check the latest border measures before entering Singapore, and be prepared to adhere to the prevailing border measures upon entry into Singapore.

Updates to Charging Policies for Vaccinated Travellers

- Currently, SCs/PRs/LTPH travellers are responsible for medical bills in hospitals and dedicated COVID-19 treatment and recovery facilities, if they develop onset of symptoms or test positive for COVID-19 within 14 days of their return to Singapore. With the introduction of the Vaccinated Travel Framework, we will streamline our charging policies for travellers as follows:
 - a. The charging policy for SCs/PRs/LTPH travellers who are subjected to General Travel Category border measures will be aligned with the prevailing charging policy for treatment of local community COVID-19 cases (i.e. non-travellers). This means that such travellers who have been fully vaccinated⁹ will no longer be required to pay for medical bills incurred for COVID-19 treatment in hospitals and CTFs, even if they develop onset of symptoms or test positive for COVID-19 within 14 days of their return to Singapore. Any future changes to the charging policy for local community cases will correspondingly apply to this group of travellers. Travellers who are not fully vaccinated will remain responsible for their COVID-19 treatment costs, as per the charging policy for unvaccinated individuals who contracted COVID-19 in the community.
 - b. SCs/PRs/LTPH travellers who are subjected to Restricted Category border measures, will be required to pay for medical bills in hospitals and dedicated COVID-19 treatment and recovery facilities, if they develop onset of symptoms or test positive for COVID-19 within 7 days of their return to Singapore, regardless of their vaccination status.

28. The above measures will apply to all new admissions from henceforth. Patients who are to pay for their medical bills may continue to tap on their regular healthcare financing arrangements to help pay for their bills. ¹⁰ For avoidance of doubt, there is no change to the charging policy for Short Term Pass Holders, who remain responsible for any COVID-19 medical bill incurred, throughout their stay in Singapore.

Updates on Vaccination Progress and Closure of Vaccination Centres

- 29. As of 22 March 2022, over 92% of our population have completed their primary series vaccinations and 71% have received their booster doses. The paediatric vaccination exercise for children aged between 5 to 11 years old has also progressed well with over 76% of the eligible population having taken at least their first dose, including about 85% of our primary school students. Hence, the number of doses administered have reduced steadily over the past weeks.
- 30. In view of that, MOH will progressively step down the number of Vaccination Centres (VC), starting from end-April 2022, and free up these space for other uses.
 - a. Marine Parade Community Club (CC) will cease operations on 30 April 2022 while Woodlands CC and Nee Soon East CC's last day of operation will be on 31 May 2022. Marine Parade CC will administer the last Dose 1 on 9 April 2022 and continue to administer Dose 2/booster doses until 30 April 2022. Woodlands CC and Nee Soon East CC will administer the last Dose 1 on 2 May 2022 and 10 May 2022 respectively. Both CCs will continue to administer Dose 2/booster doses until 31 May 2022.
 - b. There are currently 13 paediatric VCs, and 12 will remain operational until end-April 2022. The May to July 2022, MOH plans to reduce the number of paediatric VCs from 12 to 2, as most of the 5 to 11 years old would have completed their primary series vaccinations. MOH will progressively onboard selected Public Health Preparedness Clinics and Polyclinics to provide paediatric vaccine doses to children who have yet to receive their primary series vaccination. Further details will be announced at a later date.

Second Booster Dose for Persons Aged 80 and Above and the Medically Vulnerable

31. Given emerging international data on the waning of vaccine protection against severe disease with time, EC19V has recommended a second booster dose for persons who are medically susceptible to severe COVID-19. This will help ensure that these at-risk groups remain highly protected as we resume normal activities. MOH agrees with EC19V's recommendation for the following groups to receive a second booster dose, around five months after receiving their first booster dose:

- a. All persons aged 80 years and above;
- b. Persons living in aged care facilities, such as nursing homes; and
- c. Medically vulnerable persons who are at increased risk of severe disease due to significant medical risk factors¹².
- 32. The recommendation for persons belonging to these at-risk groups to receive a second booster dose will not affect their vaccination status for VDS. They are strongly encouraged to go for the second booster to protect themselves. More details on how at-risk groups can receive their second booster dose will be announced later.
- 33. There are currently no recommendations from the EC19V for healthy persons in younger age groups to receive a second booster dose, as they have better immune responses to vaccination and are at lower risks of severe disease.

Towards COVID-19 Resilience

The stabilisation of our local COVID-19 situation has allowed us to the ease our community SMMs and border measures. We have crossed the peak of the recent wave because of the hard work and sacrifices of our healthcare workers, and our collective efforts in adhering to SMMs and health protocols. However, we will need to stay vigilant. As we relax our SMM and travel postures, it will be even more important for everyone in Singapore to stay disciplined in our fight against COVID-19, by adhering to the prevailing SMMs and following the appropriate health protocols, so as to avoid a resurgence of hospitalisation and severe illness, which could slow or even undo our progress towards gradual resumption. By working together, we can look forward to achieving COVID-19 resiliency as a nation.

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- [1] Large events and settings include attractions, cruises, MICE and large work-related events, as well as large performing arts venues and sports stadiums. For other settings such as shopping malls and large standalone stores, the density limit of 7 sqm/pax roughly translates to 75% capacity.
- [2] For example, for a 1,200 pax event, the event would need to be held at a venue which accommodates 1,600 pax, otherwise the event size would have to be capped at 1,000 pax. Events where 1m safe distancing and group size limits apply will not be subject to the 75% capacity limit, as the SMMs already ensure spreading out of attendees and the lowering of risk through mask-wearing.
- [3] Busking will resume per the National Arts Council (NAC) Busking Scheme. Please refer to the NAC website for details.
- [4] This includes settings with children below 5 years old (e.g. preschools, Early Intervention Centres, and private

education institutions). Data continues to show that COVID-19 is a mild disease in children. For Omicron, 0.018% of cases aged 0-4 years old and 0.013% of unvaccinated cases aged 5-11 years old had illness requiring oxygen supplementation or ICU care. There were no fully vaccinated cases aged 5-11 years old with severe illness.

[5] This includes Short-Term Visitors (STVs) and Work Permit Holders (WPH) such as Migrant Domestic Workers (MDWs) and existing CMP WPHs holding issued work permits who will no longer need to serve their SHN at the

Onboard centres. Non-Malaysian WPHs holding an In-Principle Approval (IPA) in the Construction, Marine

Shipyard and Process (CMP) sectors will still be required to meet the Ministry of Manpower(MOM)'s entry

requirements which include obtaining entry approvals from MOM, pending further review and until MOM

announces any changes. Please refer to (https://www.mom.gov.sq/covid-19/entry-approval-requirements)MOM

website (https://www.mom.gov.sg/covid-19/entry-approval-requirements) for details.

[6] To illustrate, for 2022, non-fully vaccinated children born in or after 2010 may enter Singapore using the

protocols for fully vaccinated travellers.

[7] Non-fully vaccinated LTPHs aged 13 - 17 years may enter Singapore without needing to apply for entry

approval, subject to a 7-day SHN at their declared place of accommodation and exit-SHN PCR test. They should

also complete the full vaccination regime after arriving in Singapore.

[8] There are currently no Restricted Category countries/regions. Travellers with travel history to Restricted

Category countries/regions in the last 7 days will be required to take pre-departure and on-arrival PCR tests. They

will have to serve their 7-day SHN in a dedicated facility and be required to test negative on a PCR test before

exiting their SHN.

[9] This includes those who have been medically exempted from COVID-19 vaccination, and children aged 12

years and below (based on year of birth).

[10] Patients may tap on regular healthcare financing arrangements to help pay for these bills – for SC/PRs, this

includes Government subsidies and MediShield Life/Integrated Shield Plan (MSHL/IP) coverage. For LTPHs, this

refers to any usual financing arrangements they may have, such as private insurance.

[11] The paediatric VC at Yusof Ishak Secondary School (VC@YISS) will cease operations on 1 April 2022. The 12

paediatric VCs are located at Clementi CC, Former Hong Kah Secondary School, Hougang CC, Jalan Besar CC,

Marine Parade CC, Nee Soon CC, Our Tampines Hub, Pasir Ris Elias CC, Woodlands Galaxy CC, Senja-Cashew

CC, The Serangoon CC and Toa Payoh West CC.

[12] Vulnerable persons may receive a fourth dose as recommended by their doctors. Vulnerable persons are

individuals who are at increased risk of severe disease due to significant medical risk factors. These include

persons with chronic diseases of the heart, lungs, kidneys, liver and other organ systems.

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