

EMERGING SAFER AND STRONGER TOGETHER

 **24TH AUG 2022**

It has been two months since we last rationalised our Safe Management Measures (SMMs). Thanks to everyone's efforts, we weathered the Omicron BA.5 subvariant wave without additional domestic or travel restrictions.

2. Infection numbers in the community have steadily declined across all age groups since late July, and the week-on-week infection ratio has fallen below 0.7. As of 23 August 2022, average daily infections over a 7-day period fell to 2,700, down from a peak of 10,200 in mid-July. More importantly, the number of daily hospitalised cases has halved from more than 800 at its recent peak in July to below 400 today, and the number of Intensive Care Unit (ICU) cases has fallen to below 10.

Changes to Safe Management Measures

3. As this wave passes, our population has become more COVID-resilient, due to high vaccination and boosting rates and safe recovery from infections. We are now able to take another step towards living with COVID-19.

4. We will remove the legal requirement for mask-wearing in indoor settings from **29 August 2022**, except for settings where essential services are carried out in enclosed and crowded areas, and which are frequently used by vulnerable persons. Based on these considerations, we will still require the wearing of masks in the following two settings (further details in [Annexes A and B \(https://www.moh.gov.sg/docs/librariesprovider5/pressroom/press-releases/mtf-press-release-24-aug-2022---annexes-a-and-b.pdf?sfvrsn=6bcc839f_0\)](https://www.moh.gov.sg/docs/librariesprovider5/pressroom/press-releases/mtf-press-release-24-aug-2022---annexes-a-and-b.pdf?sfvrsn=6bcc839f_0)):

a. Healthcare facilities, residential care homes (including welfare and sheltered homes for the aged, as well as adult disability homes) and ambulances: These include the indoor premises of hospitals and polyclinics (inclusive of retail, food and beverages (F&B) outlets, common areas and other facilities within the hospital/polyclinic building); private primary care and dental facilities, specialist clinics, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) clinics, renal dialysis centres, clinical and radiological laboratories, day hospices; residential care homes; COVID-19 care facilities, testing centres and vaccination centres; as well as on emergency ambulances and medical transport vehicles

b. Public transport: This covers the MRT/LRT and public buses, and indoor public transport facilities (e.g. boarding areas within bus interchanges and MRT platforms). Mask-wearing on private transport modes, as well as school buses, private bus services and taxis, will be optional.

5. Mask-wearing required as part of sectoral regulations, such as the Singapore Food Agency's (SFA) requirement for food handlers to maintain good hygiene standards, will continue to apply.

6. Mask-wearing remains an effective way for us to minimise the risk of disease transmission. Even though we are currently in a state of the pandemic where mask-wearing in many settings would no longer be mandatory, members of the public are encouraged to continue to exercise responsibility and caution, such as wearing masks when in crowded places, or when visiting or interacting with vulnerable persons. In particular, experts have advised that the elderly and immuno-compromised should continue to wear masks in crowded indoor settings to reduce their risk of catching any respiratory infections. With the easing of SMMs, it is even more important that all of us exercise personal and social responsibility. Individuals who are unwell should continue to stay home and avoid going out. If they feel unwell when out or in the workplace, they should go home immediately to rest or see a doctor. Those who are close contacts of an infected case should follow Protocol 3 – take an Antigen Rapid Test (ART) self-test and make sure they test negative before going out over the next 5 days.

Easing of Safe Management Measures for In-Person Visits to Hospitals and Homes

7. The Ministry of Health (MOH) had earlier announced the extension of visitor SMMs at all hospital wards and residential care homes until 31 August 2022 (inclusive). As the situation in our hospitals and residential care homes improves, we will ease measures for in-person visits to hospitals and residential care homes from 1 September 2022. Please see [Annex C \(https://www.moh.gov.sg/docs/librariesprovider5/pressroom/press-releases/mtf-press-release-24-aug-2022---annex-c.pdf?sfvrsn=1984aef3_0\)](https://www.moh.gov.sg/docs/librariesprovider5/pressroom/press-releases/mtf-press-release-24-aug-2022---annex-c.pdf?sfvrsn=1984aef3_0) for more details. We seek the public's continued cooperation to comply with the revised SMMs in hospitals and residential care homes, so that we continue to keep patients and residents safe.

Vaccination-differentiated Safe Management Measures

8. There will be no changes to Vaccination-Differentiated SMMs (VDS) at this juncture. We are reviewing our vaccination policy, to transition to a system where we keep our vaccinations up-to-date, and we will review and update the VDS requirements at the same time.

9. In summary, our SMMs have served us well and helped keep us safe. We have now retired most of them in community settings as we journey further towards a new normal of living with COVID-19. However, there may be new variants that emerge, and should there be the threat of a new wave or a dangerous new variant, we may need to reintroduce SMMs or step up measures quickly to keep our community safe.

Updates on Border Measures

10. We launched the Vaccinated Travel Framework (VTF) in April this year to facilitate safe resumption of international travel. Currently, fully-vaccinated travellers can enter Singapore without having to apply for entry approval, take COVID-19 tests or undergo Stay-Home Notice (SHN).

11. In view of the improving local and global COVID-19 situation, we will make the following changes to the VTF for travellers:

a. All non-fully vaccinated travellers entering Singapore from **28 August 2022, 2359 hours** will no longer be required to undergo a 7-day SHN upon arrival, nor be subject to an exit-SHN Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test. However, they will continue to be required to test negative on a Pre-Departure Test within 2 days before departing for Singapore. Non-fully vaccinated Short-Term Visitors (STVs) will also continue to be required to purchase COVID-19 travel insurance to cover the duration of their stay in Singapore.

b. Currently, non-fully vaccinated Long-Term Pass Holders (LTPHs) and STVs aged 13 and above are required to apply for entry approval to enter Singapore. We will also lift this requirement from **28 August 2022, 2359 hours**. As LTPHs are expected to stay in Singapore for a longer period of time, they will continue to be required to meet all VDS requirements after their arrival in Singapore.

12. Travellers who test positive for COVID-19 overseas are advised to follow the recovery protocols of the host country. For travel to Singapore, those who have tested positive for COVID-19 should defer their travel plans and not board commercial flights or ferries, as they may infect fellow passengers and crew while infectious. They should only resume their travel when they test negative, and at least 72 hours from the time they first test positive.¹

13. Please refer to [Annex D](#)

(https://www.moh.gov.sg/docs/librariesprovider5/pressroom/press-releases/mtf-press-release-24-aug-2022---annex-d.pdf?sfvrsn=c2ad0da0_0) for details on border measures

for travellers entering Singapore from **28 August 2022, 2359 hours**. Travellers are strongly advised to visit the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority's (ICA) [website \(https://ica.gov.sg/enter-transit-depart\)](https://ica.gov.sg/enter-transit-depart) to check the latest border measures before entering Singapore, and be prepared to adhere to the prevailing measures upon entry. All travellers entering Singapore via air or sea must also submit their electronic health declaration before they enter Singapore, using the [SG Arrival Card e-service \(https://eservices.ica.gov.sg/sgarrivalcard\)](https://eservices.ica.gov.sg/sgarrivalcard). Travellers are strongly encouraged to do so before departing for Singapore to facilitate a smooth arrival process in Singapore; a submission can be made up to 3 days before arrival in Singapore.

Vaccination Requirements for Work Pass Holders

14. To sustain the high vaccination rates in our population, support safe reopening of our society and economy, and minimise business disruptions, COVID-19 vaccination will continue to be a condition for the approval of all new applications for long-term passes and work passes. For renewal applications, vaccination will also continue to be required for the renewal of existing work passes for Work Permit Holders and S Pass Holders (a) from the Construction, Marine Shipyard and Process sectors or (b) residing in dormitories, given that their worksites and dormitories are settings at higher risk of disease spread.² The revised vaccination requirements for work pass renewals will take effect from **1 October 2022**. Please refer to the Ministry of Manpower's (MOM) [website \(https://www.mom.gov.sg/covid-19/vaccination-requirements-as-a-condition-for-mom-passes\)](https://www.mom.gov.sg/covid-19/vaccination-requirements-as-a-condition-for-mom-passes) for more details.

Updates on Vaccination in Preparation for the Next Wave

Second Booster Now Recommended for Persons Aged 60 Years and Above

15. Previously, persons aged 80 years and older were recommended to receive a second booster vaccine, and it was also offered to persons aged 50 to 79 years.

16. The Expert Committee on COVID-19 Vaccination (EC19V) now recommends that all persons aged 60 years and older receive a second mRNA COVID-19 booster vaccine from five months after their first booster. The first booster confers good protection against hospitalisation and severe COVID-19 in persons aged 60 to 79 years, and has helped us weather through the current wave. However, as it has been over a year since we administered the first booster to this age group, we expect the protection to gradually wane. We need to keep our vaccinations up-to-date, to prepare for possible future infection waves.

17. Further, latest evidence indicates that a second booster can further strengthen vaccine effectiveness against severe diseases, which increased from 94% to 97% for those aged 70 to 79, and from 97% to 98% for those aged 60 to 69. Therefore MOH

agrees with the EC19V's recommendation for all persons aged 60 and above to receive a second booster. Persons who are medically vulnerable are also encouraged to receive their second booster. We will continue to offer the second booster to all persons aged 50 to 59 years.

18. All persons eligible for their primary series vaccination, first booster or second booster may receive their doses by walking into any of the 10 Joint Testing and Vaccination Centres (JTVCs) located across the island. The full list of JTVCs, their locations and opening hours can be found at <https://www.gowhere.gov.sg/vaccine> (<https://www.gowhere.gov.sg/vaccine>). Residents may also book an appointment at the JTVCs, participating Public Health Preparedness Clinics (PHPCs), or polyclinics via their SMS invitation.

Booster Now Recommended for Children Aged 5 to 11 Years

19. EC19V now also recommends that children aged 5 to 11 years receive one booster dose of the Pfizer-BioNTech/Comirnaty vaccine, from five months after the second dose of their primary vaccination series, to sustain protection against severe illness. This will also strengthen our preparation for the next infection wave.

20. MOH accepts EC19V's recommendations in full and is preparing to start boosting children aged 5 to 11 years in the fourth quarter of the year, likely when examinations in primary schools are towards the tail end or over. We will be setting up five dedicated Vaccination Centres (VCs) across the island to administer booster doses for these children. We will announce more details closer to the date.

21. The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) has just extended the authorisation of Moderna's Spikevax COVID-19 vaccine via the Pandemic Special Access Route (PSAR) to children, including very young children aged 6 months up to 5 years old. A decision on the recommendation for vaccination of this age group is expected soon. If approved, we will time it together with the booster exercise for children aged 5 to 11, and administer them at the same centres for the convenience of parents.

Vaccination as Primary Line of Defence

22. MOH and EC19V will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and the level of protection against severe COVID-19 in various segments of the population and will update our vaccination recommendations as appropriate.

23. We have been able to take this decisive step today to lift mask-wearing requirements in most settings because of the collective effort of everyone to vaccinate and boost when

recommended. Vaccination is the best form of protection against severe disease as we head towards normalcy. We urge everyone to ensure that your vaccination status is up-to-date, and to receive your primary series and booster doses as recommended, if you have not yet done so.

Exercising Personal and Social Responsibility

24. This further easing of SMMs and border measures is a significant milestone towards living with COVID-19. While many SMMs are no longer mandated, we urge everyone to continue to exercise personal and social responsibility. As we continue our journey towards achieving COVID-19 resiliency, we must also remain vigilant as the situation can quickly change with the emergence of new variants.

[1] Or on Day 7 for vaccinated persons (and children below 12 years old) if they continue to test positive. Non-fully vaccinated persons aged 12 years and above should only resume travel on Day 14 if they continue to test positive.

[2] Other work pass renewals will no longer be subject to a vaccination requirement from 1 October 2022.

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