

COVID-19 Protocols

Guidelines for Retreatants

The following is based on the Center for Disease Controls guidelines and adapted to the unique situation of an outdoor meditation retreat.

We are sending everyone this information as the starting point for caring for ourselves and the community. Much of it will be self-evident but having it written down will help us build confidence and trust that we are on the same page. We can do this!

COVID-19 is thought to be spread in one of two ways

- People who are in close contact with one another (within 6 feet, some would say even farther is possible) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks loudly or sings. These droplets may land in the mouth or nose of someone or be inhaled into the lungs. The risk of this is much greater in a contained, poorly ventilated space. Even outside, though, there is still risk – especially at close proximity.
- Also, it may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. This has now been described as a much less likely mode for transmission but still worth keeping in mind.
- Evidence suggest that the risk of transmission is much greater in a poorly ventilated indoor space; the risk outside – especially with social distancing and mask wearing – is much less.
- This is a good article to familiarize yourself with the general conditions for transmission: <https://www.erinbromage.com/post/the-risks-know-them-avoid-them>

Last two weeks before the retreat starts

The Dharma Treasure Retreat Center requires that all participants have a negative COVID test prior to attending the retreat.

- We suggest you find out how long it takes to get results in your area and schedule your test accordingly. Please have your negative test result before travelling.
- This blog post from the Harvard Medical School (<https://tinyurl.com/yaor8tmw>) states that **molecular testing using a nasal swab** is the best.
- Please do not plan to get a rapid test as results from that test are more likely to have false positives. These may also be called antigen tests.
- Plan accordingly! Sometimes it takes multiple days to get results back, depending on how many tests are being performed and analyzed.

***** It is then YOUR responsibility** after your test to be extremely safe and cautious. Please do everything you are able so as not to become infected after the test and prior to the retreat.

Please carefully monitor your health during the last two weeks just prior to the start of the retreat. A negative test result is one safeguard. The second safeguard is that each participant commits to monitoring their symptoms.

- Keep asking yourself regularly: *Am I feeling poorly in any way?*
 - Symptoms that might be part of a COVID infection:
 - fever > 100 – please use a thermometer and check if you have any symptoms or indication;
 - cough;
 - sore throat;
 - shortness of breath;
 - unusual headaches;
 - fatigue; chills;
 - gastro-intestinal symptoms such as diarrhea or stomach cramps;
 - loss of sense of smell or taste.

This fever and symptom screen is important for two reasons:

- If you are infected and infectious, you will risk transmitting the virus to others.
- Even more important: You do not want to be in an isolated wilderness setting if/when you were to become sick from a recent infection. Silent hypoxia (having a low oxygen level without knowing it) has been reported. Being away from your home and a nearby hospital could be dangerous.

Traveling to the retreat center

- Please purchase, prior to travelling, all the food you need for travel and lunch on the first day of the retreat; also, any equipment or anything else you need for the retreat. Preferably in your local area through the mail or curbside pickup.
- To protect people in the area local to the retreat center, we ask that you do all that you can not to go to stores or restaurants in the small towns in the area or on route
- We encourage people not to carpool to the retreat. Two reasons:
 - If one person is already infected, riding in the enclosed space of a car for long distances puts the other person at risk of getting infected.
 - If someone starts to become ill while in the wilderness, they may need to return home early, taking a car with them and leaving the other person without a ride home. It would not be fair to another participant to ask that they provide such a ride, thus putting themselves in a contained space with another for a long drive.
- If two people are already a couple or roommates, they may decide to come together in the same car. If so, they should understand that if one of them has to leave early, the other will have to go too. Again, not fair to ask another participant to provide a ride.
- While driving to our retreat location, be mindful of using gloves, washing hands, and/or using hand sanitizer whenever you get gas or use a public bathroom. (Or just pee at the side of the road – a much better option!)
- Travelling by plane carries a high risk of COVID exposure. Social distancing is very difficult, if not impossible; and even wearing a mask will not be very protective because of

the need to breathe in the shared airspace for hours. We therefore require that anyone who chooses to fly self-quarantine for at least one week to be sure they don't develop immediate symptoms. If someone chooses to do this, we encourage them not to do the self-quarantine in a small town near our backcountry site, given the risk of bringing the virus to a small community that has had minimal exposure.

On the retreat

Getting started

- We will be camping and retreating on a very large piece of land (200 acres) with an infinite number of camping sites. So, there is plenty of space for everyone to have a camping site with space and shade.
- We will be maintaining social distancing (a minimum of six feet apart; farther is better) and always wearing a mask when near others. The safety of all depends on this.
- We will be using hand sanitizer and hand washing practices prior and after any contact with shared surfaces, or tools. (All bathrooms and showers are outside so we will only need to add some sanitizing protocols to maintain safety.)
- We expect little to no rain, but should that happen, no indoor spaces will be available. You will need to rely on your tent. (We do have plans for tarps and shade for the food serving area, but we won't have sufficient tarps to cover everyone while maintaining social distancing, so that will mean the tarp areas will only be for temporary use or while performing a job. The kitchen building will be off limits to everyone except the cook or for an occasional specific task associated with a yogi job.

Clean your hands often

- **Wash your hands** often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have had any worrisome contact.
- If soap and water are not readily available, **use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol**. We will have hand sanitizer, but please plan on bringing a small bottle so you can have it handy. You can refill from larger bottles we will supply. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth** with unwashed hands. (The main reason for wearing a mask is to not put others at risk when you cough, sneeze, talk or sing, but an added advantage is it will reduce the chance you'll accidentally touch your face.)

Avoid close contact or indirect touching of objects

- **Put distance between yourself and other people.** We can still smile, place your hand over your heart, bow or other ways of showing a feeling of love and connection. We will be practicing noble silence and encouraging warmth within our retreat container.
- **Hand sanitize or wash any tool before and after using.**

- **We will be regularly cleaning the door knobs etc. for the shower and bathrooms.** But we suggest you have a pocket size hand sanitizer to use before and after going through the doors.

Cover coughs and sneezes

- **Keep a mask on anytime you are near other people, including when sitting in circle.**
- **ALSO, cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or use the inside of your elbow. A homemade mask only reduces spray by around 40%, so additional covering of the mouth or nose can be helpful.
- **Immediately wash your hands** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- **We will be asking that people dispose of your own personal trash.** You will need to have your own plastic trash bag for tissues or items that you have touched. (We will make some available.)

Kitchen protocols:

- **You will need to wash your hands prior to coming into the food area for serving or a yogi job** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. We also ask that you wash your hands as you leave the area (to protect you from any contact you may have had).
- You will need to wear your mask in any area where there is food or a potential density of participants.
- There will be an outside dish station. There will be spaces to do your yogi jobs outside. All this will be explained on arrival to the site.

Site Protocols for hygiene

- There are hoses and outdoor places for water. You are welcome to use any of these to wash your hands or fill your water bottle. We ask that you not do other hygiene activities in those areas – such as brushing teeth. Please take your water bottle to a more removed location, perhaps near your tent, and brush and spit there. It is ok to wash your face at the hoses or spigots.
- We will have signups for showers – there are both a regular shower and sun showers. There is only one indoor shower so each individual will be asked to use it only occasionally during our time.

Sitting Together

- We will be sitting together in a circle. We will want to maintain distance. Susie will have a small camp that allows for a more spacious circle while still allowing everyone to hear. We may find that modifying the ‘circle’ shape makes sense. For the most part, only Susie will be talking – so giving them more space will allow for their masks to come off during talks and

instructions. During the majority of sitting and walking we can allow our spacing to be larger and remove masks.

- Please bring your mask to practice discussions. Depending on distance and sound we may be able to remove them or it may be wise to continue to wear your mask.
- **When away from the circle, sitting or doing walking, near your tent, on the beach, etc. please remove your mask! You are outside and you can breathe free!!**

Monitoring Your Health

- **Continue monitoring your health:**
- Consider checking your temperature daily.
- Ask yourself regularly: *Am I feeling poorly in any way?*
- Again, symptoms that might be part of a COVID infection: fever > 100; cough; sore throat; shortness of breath; unusual headaches; fatigue; chills; gastro-intestinal symptoms such as diarrhea or stomach cramps; loss of sense of smell or taste.
- **If you become sick**, talk to the teacher about how best to manage your own health and the health of the community. As always, approach the teacher being mindful of social distancing and wearing a mask. Please know there is good medical care only a short plane ride away if you should need it!

Post Retreat: Contact Tracing

- Contact tracing is key to slowing the spread of COVID-19 and helps keep you, your family, and your community safe.
- **If you test positive for COVID within 14 days of the last day of our retreat**, we expect you to contact us and let us know. This will allow us to notify other participants of their potential exposure so they can take the proper safety precautions.
- More info about contact tracing can be found [here](#).

Please consider printing this and bringing it with you as a reminder of the details.