

## OUR RESPONSE TO COVID-19

### AGHAM AT KAALAMAN PARA SA BAYAN!

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#### E-MAIL

[gpconcepcion@gmail.com](mailto:gpconcepcion@gmail.com)

[paase2020manila@gmail.com](mailto:paase2020manila@gmail.com)

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#### PAASE BULLETIN # 12

#### ON PAASE STRATEGIC ACTION GROUP 1: CONTAINMENT & MITIGATION

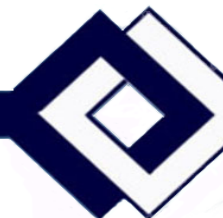
Addressed to: General public and LGUs; Media

#### COVID-19, HANDWASHING AND ALTERNATIVE HAND HYGIENE

Handwashing is one of the most important contributions to slowing down transmission of COVID-19 and keeping ourselves and our communities safe.<sup>1</sup> The availability of safe water is essential to ensure handwashing, but this cannot be assured in many low- and middle-income settings including (but not limited to) urban poor areas in the Philippines. Less than ideal alternatives include 70% alcohol-based rubs and 0.05% chlorinated water. The WHO guidance on water, sanitation, hygiene and waste management for the COVID-19 virus<sup>2</sup> that addresses water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) risks and practices in health care settings provides the following hand hygiene practices:

1. Hand hygiene is extremely important. Cleaning hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based rub should be performed according to the instructions known as “My 5 Moments for Hand Hygiene.”<sup>3</sup> Although the 5 moments were designed for health-care workers, they can apply to home health care settings as well.
2. Hand hygiene in non-health care settings should be practiced “in homes ... and crowded public places – such as markets ... and train or bus stations” – “before preparing food, before and after eating, after using the toilet or changing a child’s diaper, and after touching animals.”<sup>2</sup>
3. When hands are visibly soiled, and safe water and soap are available, handwashing should be performed for 40-60 seconds according to WHO poster on How to Handwash.<sup>4</sup>
4. When hands are not visibly soiled, hand rubbing with an alcohol-based product (such as 70% ethyl or isopropyl alcohol) should be performed for 20-30 seconds according to the WHO poster on How to Handrub.<sup>5</sup>
5. If an alcohol-based hand rub or soap are not available, then chlorinated water (0.05%) is an option for handwashing although prepared dilutions might be inaccurate and frequent use may lead to dermatitis (which could increase the risk of infection) and asthma.<sup>2</sup>

The importance of handwashing and hand hygiene cannot be overstressed during this COVID-19 pandemic. As many as 8 out of 10 children in China with negative SARS-CoV-2 nasopharyngeal tests revealed persistently positive rectal swabs (suggesting the possibility of fecal-oral transmission),<sup>6</sup> concordant with recent findings of COVID-19 in sewage three weeks before the first case was reported in the Netherlands.<sup>7</sup>



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#### References:

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Jose Florencio F. Lapeña Jr. MA, MD, FPCS, FPSOHS  
Department of Otorhinolaryngology  
Ward 10, Philippine General Hospital  
Taft Avenue, Ermita, Manila 1000 Philippines  
Phone: (632) 8554 8467 Fax: (632) 8524 4455  
Email: [jflapena@up.edu.ph](mailto:jflapena@up.edu.ph)

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[gpconcepcion@gmail.com](mailto:gpconcepcion@gmail.com)

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