

Delivery of Community Intermittent Preventive Treatment in Pregnancy in the Context of COVID-19

This program brief was developed to support the implementation of community intermittent preventive treatment in pregnancy (C-IPTp) with the presence of COVID-19. The background section covers basic but important information about COVID-19. This is followed by a job aid to support implementation at country level. The intended audience is health managers (malaria, maternal, and child health), health care providers, and implementers. Kindly note that the implementation of C-IPTp at this time is **subject to the prevailing national guidelines/restrictions** put in place to minimize the transmission of COVID-19.

What Is COVID-19?

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.¹

Who Is at Risk of COVID-19?

Everyone is at risk of COVID-19 infection, even though older people and people with pre-existing medical conditions (such as high blood pressure, heart disease, lung disease, cancer, or diabetes) appear to develop serious illness more often than others do.¹

Unlike Zika virus, not much is known about how COVID-19 affects pregnant women and their babies.² Therefore, it is best for **pregnant women and their caregivers to follow the global and national prevention guidance** provided for the entire population.

What Are the Symptoms of COVID-19?

Some people become infected but do not develop any symptoms and do not feel unwell. The most common symptoms associated with COVID-19 include **fever, dry cough, and shortness of breath. These symptoms may appear 2–14 days after exposure. Difficulty breathing** is a sign of **serious illness**, for which the patient should seek immediate medical attention.¹

How can you avoid getting or spreading COVID-19?

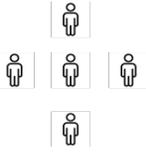
General Measures¹

Global recommendations for the prevention of COVID-19 infection are listed in Table 1 below.

¹ WHO. 2020. Q&A on coronaviruses (COVID-19). WHO website. <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>. [March 9.]

² WHO. 2020. Q&A on COVID-19, pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding. WHO website. <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-on-covid-19-pregnancy-childbirth-and-breastfeeding>. [March 18.]

Table 1: General measures for prevention of COVID-19

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If you do not have soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand rub that contains at least 60% alcohol. If these are not available commercially, you can make your own (see World Health Organization guidance below on how to make a hand rub).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a social distance of at least 3 feet (1 meter). Avoid gatherings of more than five people or as is recommended in your national guidelines.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid touching your face (eyes, nose, mouth), especially with unwashed hands.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wipe frequently touched items (doorknobs, light switches, remote control, appliances, handles, staircase railings, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks, etc.) with recommended disinfectants, such as sodium hypochlorite (e.g., household bleach), hydrogen peroxide, or alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice cough or sneeze etiquette: Cough into your bent elbow or into a tissue, dispose of tissue immediately into a trashcan, and wash your hands with soap and water.
	<p>If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention. Call in advance and follow the directions of your health care provider. In countries where the government has established hotlines or WhatsApp platforms for communication, use it and share the information. Tell anyone who has been in contact with someone who has tested positive for the virus to stay away from others by staying at home. Stay in a specific room or area if possible, and away from other people in the home.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only wear a facemask if you have symptoms of illness or are looking after someone who is ill.

Specific measures for Community Delivery of IPTp

As the COVID-19 pandemic spreads in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is expected to affect malaria prevention including community delivery of IPTp. However, we need to do everything possible to **protect the gains of the community IPTp approach** by ensuring the availability of quality-assured sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine (SP) and empowering our community health workers (CHWs) to continue to safely distribute SP to all eligible pregnant women. We also have the responsibility to protect them against the acquisition and spread of the virus.

The [TIPTOP](#) project involves significant community engagement, including **community gatherings, household visits** by CHWs, and **training activities** and **supervision visits** for different cadres of health care workers. To this end, it is important that implementers adapt their activities to align with global and national recommendations to prevent the spread of the disease. **While the general measures outlined above apply to virtually all situations, additional guidance specific to a variety of activities conducted through C-IPTp implementation is outlined in Table 2 below.**

Table 2: Specific measures for C-IPTp

	TYPE OF ACTIVITY	USEFUL TIPS
1.	Community meetings with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community leaders/gatekeepers • Community members • Church or mosque attendees • Village drama attendees • Community health workers (CHWs) • Community group/committee attendees • Civil society organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use available flip charts or posters to educate participants about COVID-19 and how it spreads. • Implement recommended global and/or national actions to prevent spread of COVID-19 as outlined above under general measures in Table 1. • Be sure to comply with any local restrictions on travel, movement, or community gatherings, particularly the guidance on social distancing. Cooperating with disease control efforts will reduce risk of catching or spreading COVID-19.
2.	Counseling of pregnant women during home visits by CHWs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While preparing for home visits during COVID-19, CHWs should include alcohol-based hand sanitizers, facemasks, and gloves in their bags if available for use as needed, in addition to routine C-IPTp items, such as quality-assured sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine (SP), data forms, and job aids. • If anyone in a household appears to have flulike symptoms, wear a mask and gloves to avoid being infected, and keep a social distance of 3 feet. • Educate the pregnant woman and her family about the COVID-19 pandemic and about recommended global and/or national actions to prevent its spread. • Implement recommended global and/or national actions to prevent spread of COVID-19 as outlined above under general measures in Table 1.

	TYPE OF ACTIVITY	USEFUL TIPS
3.	Provision of SP by directly observed therapy (DOT) to eligible pregnant women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask eligible pregnant woman to wash her hands thoroughly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub as described in Table 1. • Ensure the pregnant woman has her own safe, drinkable water available. • Leave packet of three SP tablets on the table and ask pregnant woman to pick it up and remove the three tablets from the foil. • Observe pregnant woman swallowing the SP tablets with water. • Complete the necessary records of the interaction.
4.	Monthly meetings at health facility or in district health office <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHW monthly data and commodity review and resupply meetings with health facility focal points • Monthly data validation/review meetings at district and provincial levels and between health facility and district health office monitoring and evaluation focal points 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sure to comply with any local restrictions on travel, movement, or community gatherings, particularly the guidance on social distancing. • Implement recommended global and/or national actions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as outlined above under general measures in Table 1.
5.	Training events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training of trainers • Training of health care workers • Training of CHWs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider rescheduling or canceling training events if they are nonessential. If the training event must go ahead, the number of participants should be in line with national guidance for gatherings. An open space where social distancing can be easily implemented is preferable. • Implement the recommended global and/or national actions to prevent spread of COVID-19 as outlined in the general measures in Table 1. • Comply with any local restrictions on travel, movement, or community gatherings, particularly the guidance on social distancing. Cooperating with disease control efforts will reduce your risk of catching or spreading COVID-19.
6.	Patient care in the health facility 	Frontline health care workers interacting with pregnant women and their families need protection. It is the health manager's responsibility to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow established occupational safety and health procedures, avoid exposing others to health and safety risks, and participate in employer-provided occupational safety and health training. • Use provided protocols to assess, triage, and treat patients. • Treat patients with respect, compassion, and dignity, even if they test positive for COVID-19. • Maintain patient confidentiality. • Swiftly follow established public health reporting procedures of suspected and confirmed cases.

	TYPE OF ACTIVITY	USEFUL TIPS
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide or reinforce accurate infection prevention and control and public health information, including to concerned people who have neither symptoms nor risk. • In general, anyone doing triage should have access to personal protective equipment (PPE)—at minimum, medical mask, gloves, and apron for droplet protection. • Put on, use, take off, and dispose of PPE properly. • Self-monitor for signs of illness and, if illness occurs, self-isolate and report illness to managers. • Advise management if any health care worker is experiencing signs of undue stress or mental health challenges that require supportive interventions. • Report to immediate supervisor any situation believed to present an imminent and serious danger to life or health.
7.	<p>Integrated supportive supervision visits</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reschedule any supervision visits where travel has been restricted. • Implement recommended global and/or national actions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 as outlined above under general measures in Table 1. • When travel is not restricted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct the supervision visit in a supportive manner and in line with the national guidelines. - Debrief the health facility team and educate staff on COVID-19 and on national efforts to contain it. • Remind the health facility manager and/or health care workers interacting with patients that they should use PPE if clients have COVID-19 symptoms.
8.	<p>Individual capacity-building</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update yourself on infection prevention recommendations for the COVID-19 pandemic. You may wish to take advantage of WHO's free self-paced online training course or update your knowledge from Jhpiego's infection prevention and control learning resource package. • Follow your country's COVID-19 recommendations and look for the most up-to-date information on the situation in your area. • Keep up-to-date with the latest COVID-19 information by visiting the World Health Organization's COVID-19 webpage.

Additional reading materials (hyperlinked to source)

1. [World Health Organization COVID-19 website](#)
2. [Jhpiego's COVID-19 response website](#)
3. [Jhpiego's infection prevention and control reference manual](#)
4. [Handwashing with soap and water](#)

5. [Hand hygiene with alcohol-based hand rub](#)
6. [How to make your own alcohol-based hand-rub](#)
7. [Rational use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\) for coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)