
COVID-19 GUIDE FOR SEX WORKERS



Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause infections ranging from the common cold to more severe respiratory infections and diseases such as SARS / MERS. It is referred to as a pandemic due to its harsh global spread.

Sex workers are in the high risk group as in other occupational groups that necessitate close contact for a long time. Besides, the majority of them go on their lives outside of traditional support systems (social security, health insurance, paid leave, sick leave etc.). Consequently, such times of crisis deeply affect sex workers, who are among the groups that frequently experience discrimination in their daily lives. These effects of the pandemic are also reflected in the decline in income and uncertainty about how livelihoods can be accessed.



I went through very difficult days in the pandemic. I could not pay my rent, find a job, or work. It was very hard for me, it is still the same. I did not receive any help from anywhere. I have never received it from the municipality, the state or associations.

(Sakarya, Trans Sex Worker, Age: 36-50)

The pandemic period affected sex work very bad. I do not think the government offers support in this regard. Since it is an occupation with direct contact, it was both risky in terms of virus and a very financially worrying period.

(Ankara, Trans Sex Worker, Age: 18-24)

This document has been formed by adopting a risk / harm reduction approach based on the recommendations of national and international scientific sources. We have tried to collect information that can help sex workers protect themselves in their daily and work lives and decrease the harm they may face in these hard times.

THE WAYS OF CORONAVIRUS TRANSMISSION

The disease is primarily transmitted by droplets. In addition, it is transmitted by the droplets emitted by sick individuals through coughing, sneezing, laughing, talking, and after contact with other people's hands, bringing their hands to the mouth, nose and eye mucosa.

The contagion time of Covid-19 is not known exactly. It may be contagious, with or without symptoms. The transmission time is thought to last up to 14 days after exposure to the virus. It can be said that those who do not show symptoms yet who still carry the virus are a little less contagious, but it does not mean that they do not transmit it to another person.

PREVENTING CORONAVIRUS TRANSMISSION

PERSONAL HYGIENE

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (After each new contact with an object that is unsure of its cleanliness, when entering the house, preparing a meal, after using the WC, after wiping the nose, sneezing or coughing, before and after contact with an ill person, etc.)
- Use hand sanitizer when you are unable to find soap and water. Rub your hands for at least 20 seconds.
- Keep your hands away from your face.
- Throw tissue away after using it or cover your face with the inside of your elbow while coughing or sneezing..

PERSONAL HYGIENE

- Ask the people with whom we will contact to wash their hands and faces thoroughly with soap.
- Wash your hands at once when you come into contact with materials such as tissue belonging to someone who is sneezing or coughing.
- Repeat the cleaning steps after touching things that too many people come into contact with, such as money.
- Clean your home, particularly your kitchen and bathroom, regularly. Wipe areas that are frequently touched with diluted bleach (1 part bleach per 100 parts water).

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- It is highly important to comply with hygiene rules to prevent contagion and to stay at a safe physical distance.
- The best known way of preventing the disease is to avoid exposure to the virus.
- Try to keep a distance of at least 1-1.5 meters from people.
- Wear your mask by covering your nose and following the correct mask wearing steps of health institutions.
- Keep in mind that the mask will be a part of our social and business life for a while.
- Avoid all kinds of physical contact such as handshaking, hugging, kissing in your daily life and social environment.

- Refuse to meet face to face with people who show symptoms of sickness (cough, fever, difficulty breathing), who are in quarantine or at risk of transmitted to the virus before the expiry of their quarantine.
- Remember that people who show no symptoms or have mild symptoms may be a vector.
- If you have a chronic sickness, if you are over the age of 50, if you live with someone whose age is over 50 with a chronic condition, be careful not to host guests or contact people.

CORONAVIRUS SYMPTOMS

The most common symptoms

- ◇ Fever
- ◇ Dry cough
- ◇ Tiredness
- ◇ Muscle and joint pain

Less common symptoms

- ◇ Pain and aches
 - ◇ Throat pain
 - ◇ Diarrhoea
- ◇ Conjunctivitis (blood in the eye)
 - ◇ Headache
 - ◇ Loss of taste or sense of smell
- ◇ Rash on the skin or discoloration of fingers or toes

Serious symptoms

- ◇ Difficulty in breathing or shortness of breath
- ◇ Chest pain or pressure in the chest
- ◇ Loss of speech or movement

WHAT SHOULD WE DO IF WE HAVE SYMPTOMS ?



- People infected with the virus start to show symptoms within an average of 5-6 days. However, this period can take up to 14 days.



- If you experience serious symptoms, seek medical attention immediately. Make sure to call before visiting your doctor or healthcare facility.



- Many healthy people experience mild illness. Therefore, when you begin to show mild symptoms such as headache and runny nose, it is advised not to panic and to isolate yourself first.



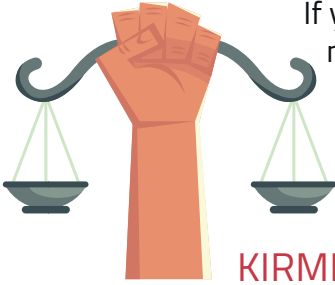
- People who show mild symptoms and do not have any other health problems should go through the treatment process at home.



- If your condition and symptoms do not improve (breathing difficulty, fever, etc.),
 - If you are elderly,
 - If you have chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure, or have immune deficiency,
 - If you have a cardiovascular or lung disease,
- contact a healthcare facility by wearing a mask.



- If you think you have Covid-19 symptoms or if you want to get information about it; you may call the Ministry of Health Communication Centre - SABIM 184.



If you are exposed to discrimination and / or mistreatment due to your job and gender identity when you apply to health institutions, you can request consultancy from our legal support line on the steps you can take.

KIRMIZI SEMSIYE LEGAL SUPPORT LINE

0534 010 95 98

This situation, which develops outside of us and that we cannot control, can make us feel insecure, helpless or sad.

It is rather normal that the uncertainty we are experiencing due to coronavirus causes stress and makes you feel insecure.

Separate what you can control and what you cannot.

But it is important to remember that we are not helpless and alone, that we always have the means to intervene in the situation.

SAFETY AND MENTAL WELLNESS

Washing hands, paying attention to our diet, avoiding risky behaviours, and not filling our minds with unnecessary or false news are some of the things we can do.

Be careful to stay in the present. Do not focus on possibilities that have not yet happened or disaster scenarios.

*Share your feelings with your trusted friends. Consult a professional if necessary.
-Remember that if you have security problems, if have been subjected to violence and abuse, you are not alone and you can seek support.*

Focus on things that will make you feel safe.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH




- There is no evidence that coronavirus is a sexually transmitted infection.

- Corona virus has also been detected in semen and faeces. However, studies are ongoing whether it is possible to be transmitted through semen and faeces. It is believed that this was not a common route of transmission at the time this document has been prepared.




- However, close contact established during sexual intercourse will maximize the risk of contagion of droplets containing viruses.

- Skin contact, working face to face and not keeping a distance of 1-1.5 meters will be a risky behaviour for sure.



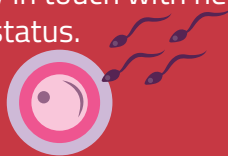
- Condoms protect you from sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancy; but it does not have any protection against coronavirus. However, you can use protection methods such as condoms, oral barriers and gloves to minimize the risk of possible transmission of coronavirus detected in sexual fluids or faeces.

- There is no confirmed evidence that HIV or other anti-viral drugs are effective in treating Covid-19 disease.

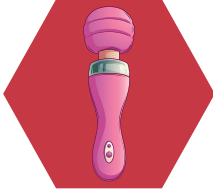


- Although diseases that suppress immunity pose a risk for Covid-19, it is enough for individuals who go on antiretroviral treatment and live with HIV whose viral load is suppressed to follow the advice for the general population.

- In this period, it is important for people recently diagnosed with HIV to access treatment without loss of time, and those who continue treatment to stay in touch with healthcare suppliers about the long-term drug stock status.



COVID-19 AND SEXUALITY



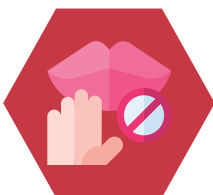
Remember that you are your safest sex partner in this period when face-to-face contact poses a risk. Do not forget to wash your hand or the sex toy you use with plenty of water and soap before and after masturbation.

Selecting fewer and more reliable partners in this period will minimize the risk of Covid-19 for you.



By observing whether your partner is showing symptoms or not, you can ask them questions about this. In situations that are uncomfortable with you, it is always in your control to disapprove of the intercourse.

Avoid direct contact with body fluids (by using methods such as condoms, oral barriers, gloves).



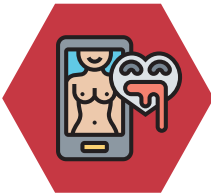
Avoid kissing, saliva exchange, mouth-to-skin contact, and getting objects that touch someone else (including your fingers) into your mouth as much as possible.

Choose sexual positions that minimize face-to-face contact.



Make sure that the parts (sheets, door handles, faucets, etc.) that your partner touched after sex are cleaned.

Consider offering alternatives (e.g. erotic massage, striptease) instead of direct contact.



In times of increasing quarantine measures, you can consider creating alternative channels through video-chat, phone calls, text messages or various subscription-based fan apps.

Be careful not to post any images that may reveal your face or your identity in order to ensure your safety nowadays, when the internet is taking a great part in our sexual life.



We try to maintain the free condom support for sex workers in the most suitable and safe way, within the limits of possibility. You can call us to have information about the current condom distribution plan.

BE INFORMED!
BE CAREFUL!
BE READY!

It is of great importance that you are prepared for a minimum of 14 days of isolation and serious decline in your income.

Financially prepare for the possibility of tightening quarantine measures. Creating an emergency savings to meet your needs for a while can diminish the damage you may encounter in unexpected situations.

In this period of time, consider turning to the types of services that can be performed by maintaining social distance.

Get accurate information from reliable sources and disseminate it.

Be prepared and stay safe.

We will be here to support each other and empower solidarity networks.

KIRMIZI SEMSİYE SEXUAL HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION




 0538 973 48 00 / 0545 347 57 27

 info@kirmizisemsiye.org

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- *SexWork COVID-19: Guidelines for Sex Workers, Clients, Third Parties, and Allies From Butterfly Asian and Migrant Sex Workers Support Network and Maggie's Toronto Sex Workers Action Project*
- http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID19_SexWorkersGuidance.pdf

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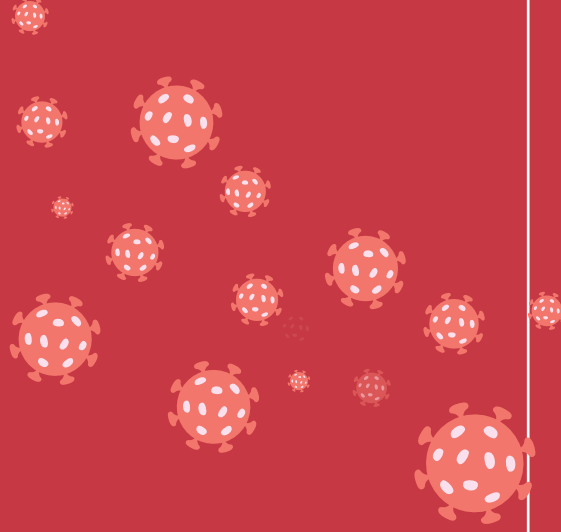
Red Umbrella Sexual Health and Human Rights Association
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Ankara
www.kirmizisemsiye.org
info@kirmizisemsiye.org
0312 419 29 91

Prepared for Publication by : Emre Sarıkaya
Design: Deniz Günaydın

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www.kirmizisemsiye.org
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