Zen Center of New York City
Fire Lotus Temple

COVID-19 Guidelines
As of 3.9.2022
Introduction

COVID-19 Basics
(Adapted from CDC website)

COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) is a contagious disease caused by a virus named SARS-CoV-2. COVID-19 most often causes respiratory symptoms that can feel much like a cold, a flu, or pneumonia. COVID-19 may attack more than your lungs and respiratory system. Other parts of your body may also be affected by the disease.

- Most people with COVID-19 have mild symptoms, but some people become severely ill.
- Some people including those with minor or no symptoms may suffer from post-COVID conditions — or “long COVID”.
- Older adults and people who have certain underlying medical conditions are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
- Hundreds of thousands of people have died from COVID-19 in the United States.
- Vaccines against COVID-19 are safe and effective. Vaccines teach our immune system to fight the virus that causes COVID-19.

COVID-19 spreads when an infected person breathes out droplets and very small particles that contain the virus. These droplets and particles can be breathed in by other people or land on their eyes, noses, or mouth. In some circumstances, they may contaminate surfaces they touch. People who are closer than 6 feet from the infected person are most likely to get infected.

COVID-19 is spread in three main ways:

- Breathing in air when close to an infected person who is exhaling small droplets and particles that contain the virus.
- Having these small droplets and particles that contain virus land on the eyes, nose, or mouth, especially through splashes and sprays like a cough or sneeze.
- Touching eyes, nose, or mouth with hands that have the virus on them.*

Ensuring the safety of the Sangha

In order to ensure the safety of our community, the Abbot and Temple Advisory Committee (TAC), in close consultation with the MRO Board and epidemiological advisors, are carefully monitoring conditions and governmental guidelines. The following guidelines are current as of March 2022 and will be updated as appropriate.
Contact Us
If you have any questions or concerns about these guidelines, please contact our office at zcnyc@dharma.net or call (718) 875-8229.

Hours of Operation and Service Format

The Temple is open for zazen (seated meditation) and kinhin (walking meditation) Tuesday evening through Friday evening (6:30pm – 8:00pm) and Wednesday morning through Friday morning (6:30am – 8:00am), as well as the weekly Sunday program (9:30am – 12:30pm) and special workshops and retreats.

The Sunday morning program is limited to 30 - 35 participants when held in the Buddha Hall and 40 - 45 participants when held in the Zendo, and requires pre-registration. For more information on Temple offerings and the pre-registration process for the Sunday program, please visit our website.

Chanting

Everyone may chant during the service. While the liturgust (chant leader) will remove their mask, as of March 2022, everyone else should keep their mask on while chanting.

Face-to-face teaching

We have resumed face-to-face teaching (daian). Both the teacher and the student should remain masked when in the daian room.

Robes

Students may store their robes at the temple.

Health Protocols

Vaccination

Anyone entering Fire Lotus Temple should be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. If you have not been fully vaccinated and would like to participate in Temple activities, please contact the Temple office at 718-875-8229 or zcnyc@dharma.net and ask for Yunen or Hojin. We will make our best efforts to accommodate you.
**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Anyone entering the public areas of Fire Lotus Temple must wear face coverings that snugly cover the nose and mouth. Face masks with exhalation valves or vents, bandanas and gaiters are not permitted.

If you do not have a face mask, we can provide one for you. No one will be allowed in the building if they are not wearing an appropriate mask.

Masks may be removed for a short duration in order to drink water, but should be replaced quickly afterwards. Consumption of food and other beverages inside the temple (other than in resident areas) is not permitted at this time.

**Hand-sanitizing**

We encourage everyone wash their hands or to use hand sanitizer upon arrival at the Temple and prior to entering the sitting area. Signage will be posted indicating where sanitizer is available.

**Please do not come if you feel sick! Take good care and return when you are feeling better.**

COVID-19 symptoms include:

- Fever (100.4 F or higher) or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

If you are experiencing any of these symptoms, please arrange for a COVID-19 test and wait until you have recovered to join us. Anyone arriving at the Temple with visible symptoms will be asked to come back another time.

**Social distancing**

Social distancing is no longer required at the Temple. However, retreats and programs will be organized to avoid over-crowding.
The Facility

Entrances and the separation of public and resident space
In order to separate the public area of the Temple building from the areas used by the residents, certain spaces will be designated as “resident-only” and others as “public” spaces.

The following spaces will be accessed and used only by residents:

West door (the rightmost door when viewing the Temple from the front sidewalk)

- West stairway
- 3rd Floor
- 4th Floor

The following spaces will be accessible to pre-registered Sangha members joining for zazen, subject to the health protocols noted above:

- East Door (the leftmost door when viewing the Temple from the front sidewalk)
- East Stairway
- Main Zendo
- Buddha Hall
- 2nd floor coat room
- 2nd floor Bathroom near coat room

Occupancy
Attendance at Sunday service will be capped at 30-35 if in Buddha Hall and 40-45 in the Zendo attendance at other programs may be limited to avoid overcrowding.

Ventilation

With the sangha’s health in mind, Fire Lotus Temple recently installed a new HVAC system with MERV 13 filters as well an ultraviolet light disinfection system. This system provides near-hospital-grade air filtration. In addition, we will have HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) air purifiers, which are recommended by the CDC to reduce the risk of COVID transmission, running at all times during zazen and other onsite programs.