

Zen Center of New York City  
Fire Lotus Temple

**COVID-19 Guidelines**

As of 4.12.2023

# 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 April 2023 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](mailto: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 regular Saturday workshops and retreats.

For more information on Temple offerings, please contact us at [zcnyc@dharma.net](mailto:zcnyc@dharma.net) or 718-875-8229.

## Chanting

Everyone may chant during the service. The liturgist (chant leader) will remove their mask; everyone else should keep their mask on while chanting.

## Face-to-face teaching

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

## Robes

Formal MRO students are expected to wear robes and may store them at the temple.

## Health Protocols

### Vaccination

While we strongly encourage vaccination, the Temple Advisory Council lifted the Temple's COVID vaccination requirement in March 2023. Vaccination against COVID-19 is no longer necessary to participate in services or retreats at the Zen Center of New York City.

### 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. **We strongly encourage the use of a high-quality mask (such as an N95), and we would appreciate it if you would bring your own mask.**

In special cases, especially for longer or more intensive retreats, the mask requirement will be waived for those who are able to present a negative COVID test. Any supplementary precautions will be specified in your registration email.

Masks may be removed for a short duration in order to drink water, but should be replaced quickly afterwards. available.

### Hand hygiene

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.

### Social distancing

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

**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.

# 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
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor
- 4<sup>th</sup> 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
- 2<sup>nd</sup> floor coat room
- 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Bathroom near coat room

## 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.