

Hygienic and health rules for the Tai National Park Chimpanzee Project

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Basics:

- Respect the chimpanzees and consider them highly susceptible to all pathogens that may come from humans
- Avoid taking any risk of disease transmission under all conditions.
- Be aware that all the hygiene measures taken are just a reduction of the risk, so maximise the effect of the measures by following them strictly
- A limited number of people should have access to the chimps. The less people and different people, the less risk.

Specific rules:

Sick people:

- Nobody feeling sick or not well may go to the chimps
- People feeling sick leave the chimpanzee research camp and stay at the central camp or village
- From everyone starting to feel sick in the forest a throat swab will be taken and stored in Liquid Nitrogen. A nose swab is taken as well and used for a specific RSV quick test (BINAX). If the test is positive also the other people at this camp are tested and all positive people (also those without symptoms) are leaving the camp as well.
- Sick people are reported to the veterinarian and name, date and symptoms are documented
- Special attention is given to other people who were in contact with this person no matter if RSV positive or negative.

Hygiene barriers:

- Hygiene barriers at the beginning of all paths out of the camps and into the forest are established. They consist of a little shelter where forest clothes and boots have to stay and a boot disinfection bath (one for "pre wash" to get rid of the dirt and a second one containing chlorine solution for disinfection) which allows washing of boots each time before going to the forest and also when coming back. No boots or clothes enter the camp.
- Have new chlorine solution water changed every week.
- Forest clothes are to be washed every third day after use

Coming from outside of the park:

- Do not enter the park when not feeling well or sick.
- Arriving at the camp a RSV quick test is performed; positive people go back to the main station.

Frequency of contact with outside the park:

- Only really justifiable trips (people falling sick etc) are made to the villages
- To limit travels to villages, assistants and researchers are leaving for one week "weekends" once every 4 weeks of work in the forest, and are tested when they come back.

Going to the chimps:

- After passing the hygiene barrier you can go to the chimps.
- As soon as you get near the chimps (see them or hear them) wear a mask, make sure the mask fits well and closes around mouth and nose. A new mask needs to be taken every day you go in the forest.
- Keep a distance of a minimum of 7 meters
- In case a chimp is passing by in a distance shorter than 7 meters hold your hand on the mask and ensure perfect fit. Turn head away from chimp and try to gain distance without influencing the behaviour (don't "run away")
- Do not touch things that may be eaten by the chimps (fruits on the ground etc)
- Touch as little things as possible in general
- Do not leave any rubbish or food remains in the forest
- Stool is being made in plastic bags which are taken back to the camp.
- For urinating go far away from the chimps in a direction they will most likely not take. Do not use areas with fruits eaten by the chimps. Remove the leaves from the ground and the upper layer of the soil so the urine is absorbed quickly by the soil. Replace the moved soil and leaves back on the place to cover it.
- Do not spit in the forest also not when walking far away from the chimps without a mask.

Health observations:

- Any sign of a chimpanzee feeling not well, being more tired than usual, getting sick or being injured has to be reported to the veterinarian the same day.

Further measures and quick tests are under investigation.