

COVID-19 FAQ for Dancers and Dance Companies Returning to the Studios

The Dance USA Task Force on Dancer Health is committed to protecting the health and safety of professional dancers. The information in this document is meant as an adjunct to provide more information for dancers and companies as we all work to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 and provide safe environments for dancers in the studio. Please refer to the informational paper titled: **Return to Dancing and Training Considerations Due to COVID-19.**

The information in this document is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice or recommendations from federal, state and local public health authorities. As the knowledge regarding COVID-19 is constantly changing, please also refer to the resources contained in this document and your local public health officials for the most up to date information.

How is the COVID-19 virus spread?

- Through droplet transmission in the air
 - Coughing, sneezing, forceful expiration, singing or yelling produces larger droplets that can contain a higher virus concentration and spread farther.
 - Normal talking and breathing produce aerosol droplets that remain suspended in the air
- Through droplet transmission on surfaces - touching the virus and then touching your face

What is an asymptomatic carrier?

- A person who carries the virus, but does not show symptoms.
- Anyone at any age can be an asymptomatic carrier.
- It was surmised that a younger population may have mild to no symptoms but still infect others. However, as more people become infected, we learn more about the virus and are now seeing a rare but dangerous hyper-inflammatory condition that has been termed multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C) disease in the young.

What if I just have a runny nose, sneeze, and cough from seasonal allergies?

- These symptoms are still an issue because COVID-19 is spread in the droplets from mucous
- You may have allergies but still be an asymptomatic carrier of the virus and spread the disease, causing others to become ill
- If your allergies are not controlled, please see your doctor to help get these symptoms under control as you should not be in the studio with any of these symptoms while the virus is still a threat.

Should companies be screening dancers and staff?

- For optimal safety, the answer is yes
- Some sports teams are adopting the following daily screening measures and creating a written log for athletes prior to entering training facilities
 - Daily temperature checks.
 - Athletes presenting with a temperature > 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit should consult with a physician for further evaluation
 - Review of any symptoms that could be attributed to COVID-19
 - Cough, difficulty breathing, sore throat, unusual headache, unexplained muscle and/or joint pain, chills, fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of sense of smell, pink eye
 - Signs of increased fatigue
 - Review of other possible symptoms and feeling unwell
 - Anyone with symptoms or fever is asked to return home, report to their physician and isolate themselves.
- The same procedures should be applied to all employees entering your location
- All dancers and staff should be self-monitoring their symptoms. This may include but is not limited to:
 - Checking for fever > 100.4, cough, shortness of breath twice a day
 - Daily review of other symptoms that could be related:
 - Sore throat, congestion, headache, muscle and joint pain, chills, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, loss of sense of smell, pink eye
 - Anyone who develops symptoms should leave immediately, seek care from their physician, and isolate

Should a pulse oximeter and reading of oxygen saturation be part of COVID-19 signs and symptoms screening at the dance studio?

- There is no current research that supports the use of O₂ saturation as an initial screening measure for patients. However, in a physician's office or when administered by a health care practitioner, it can be a useful tool to identify patients who may not be showing many signs of COVID-19.
- Early in the disease, low saturation isn't always coupled with obvious respiratory difficulties.
- ANY changes or concerns with breathing should be directed to your physician immediately.

How can dance companies try to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19 during phased reintegration?

- Remember that the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is strict social distancing.
- Return to the studio in phases following the recommendations of your local public health authorities and use the **Return to Dancing and Training Considerations Due to COVID-19** as a possible guide
- Treat yourself and anyone you meet as an asymptomatic carrier
 - You should assume that you are an asymptomatic carrier and could therefore infect your dancers and anyone around you
 - You should equally assume that your dancers are asymptomatic carriers and could therefore infect you and your family.
 - This thinking is not to make you paranoid, but is an important mind set to have when reviewing each action in your workday and figuring how to decrease the risk of infecting each other.
- Go through your workday and identify times where breathing each other's air is particularly common.
 - These are the times in your workday when you need to think about blocking air transfer (like the plastic barriers now up at grocery stores and wearing face masks), and/or positioning differently.

- This includes all partnering work, time in the dressing rooms, and tactile corrections in class
- Plan for frequent disinfecting procedures as recommended by the CDC

Should dancers and staff have COVID-19 antibody testing?

- Please check with your health care provider, but currently, antibody testing is recommended only if you think you have been exposed to COVID-19 but were asymptomatic, or if you are participating in a study, or your physician suggests it.
- A COVID-19 antibody test is a blood test that can identify people who have been previously infected with the novel coronavirus. These antibodies generally arise after 1-3 weeks after infection and are not used to diagnose current disease.
- Currently, there are more than 120 antibody tests on the market and many are not considered reliable.
 - We do not know if a positive test truly means you actually have antibodies against COVID-19 or if a negative test means you do not have these antibodies
- It is not yet known if having antibodies to the virus can protect someone from getting infected with the virus again or how long that protection might last.
- Regardless of test results as positive or negative for COVID-19 antibodies, you should still take preventative measures to protect yourself and others.
- Please see the CDC website for more information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/serology-overview.html>

How does the dance environment differ from sports environments and what issues need to be considered?

- Dance classes and rehearsals are generally performed in a studio. Exercising indoors can pose a greater risk of transmission than exercising outdoors for multiple reasons including air flow and being in an enclosed space. Sharing the same air for longer than 10 minutes increases the chances of exposure and infection.
- Social distancing is hard to maintain in the dance environment due to partnering, choreography, and close formation spacing. Significant modification may be required until phase 4 reintegration.

What type of Hand Sanitizer is best?

- To be effective against COVID-19, hand sanitizer must have at least 60% ethyl alcohol or 70% isopropyl alcohol and should be allowed to dry for 30 seconds

WHEN is PPE appropriate and necessary?

- Please note that PPE is a protective layer but does not guarantee protection against the virus and is not a substitute for the most important measure of prevention of spread of the virus which is social distancing, frequent hand washing, and avoiding touching the face
- PPE is personal protective equipment and can include: a face mask, eye shield, gloves and gown to cover clothing.
- Staff who are cleaning and sanitizing studios, restrooms and high touch areas in public spaces should follow CDC guidelines for PPE when cleaning.
- The CDC guidelines recommend wearing cloth face coverings, not surgical masks or N-95 masks. Cloth face coverings can be made from household items like a bandana, T-shirt, or pillow case.
 - Masks should fit snugly over the nose and mouth, not be touched once placed on the face, and washed or discarded immediately after each use.

- Non-healthcare providers should wear masks, but do not have to wear gloves which give people a false sense of security. Touching items with gloves can transmit the virus just as easily as bare hands. It is best to practice proper hand hygiene when touching public surfaces: frequent hand washing and/or the use of a minimal 60% ethyl alcohol or 70% isopropyl alcohol based hand sanitizer and letting it dry for 30 seconds

- **Considerations for dancers wearing masks**
 - A mask will make it harder to breathe during exercise initially and dancers should self-monitor for symptoms of: lightheadedness, dizziness, numbness or tingling, and shortness of breath
 - Monitor the intensity of your class/workout as you get used to wearing a mask during exercise
 - Your body will adapt over a few weeks to wearing a mask
 - If you start to feel dizzy, imbalanced, or over fatigued stop your activity and rest
 - Do your best not to remove your mask during class or rehearsal. If you do need to remove your mask, dispose of single use masks in the trash or place a reusable mask into its own sealable bag, wash your hands and/or use an alcohol based hand sanitizer letting it dry for 30 seconds and then replace it with a clean one.
 - Dancers may require multiple masks to get through the day
 - If your mask becomes saturated with moisture from breathing or sweat you need to change into a dry mask.
 - A wet mask is less efficient at filtering bacteria and viruses
 - Masks should only be worn once and then replaced with a fresh mask.
 - All reusable masks should be cleaned ideally in a washer with hot water and soap and then dried in a dryer prior to next use. Ironing on the highest setting can also disinfect after washing and drying.
 - There are now multiple commercial reusable mask options available for use during dance/exercise

- **Do dancers need to wear gloves?**
 - Gloves are not recommended by the CDC or WHO at this time
 - Best practice is wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds and/or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer as noted above
 - Washing hands is recommended before and after entering the studio

- **Do dancers need to wear eye covering?**
 - No, since you are not caring for COVID-19 patients and this is not practical in the dance setting
 - Avoid touching eyes and face when in the studios and building
 - No one should be in the studio with an active cough or sneeze, even from allergies

What are some additional studio/classroom considerations?

- Create a space for dancers to place their bags so that social distancing can be maintained among belongings
 - These areas need to be cleaned after each dancer removes their bag
- Floor work and the touching of floors should be avoided as frequent cleaning between use of a studio is otherwise necessary
 - If floorwork is necessary you may want to consider spacing out class and rehearsal times to allow for time to disinfect the floor (see further information below on proper cleaning of floors)
- Shoes can be a potential transmitter of disease. Street shoes should be removed prior to entering any studios. All dance shoes should not be worn outside of the studio.

- Additional minimum 60% ethyl alcohol-based or 70% isopropyl-alcohol based hand sanitizer needs to be available for use when
 - Entering any room
 - After interacting with any high touch surfaces

What are the recommendations for sanitizing dance flooring?

- Most vinyl dance flooring cannot be cleaned with bleach solutions. Ammonia based or pH neutral cleaners that are generally used do not disinfect properly for COVID-19.
- It is recommended that once a day, the floors should be cleaned as usual, followed by a cleaning with 90+ alcohol in a sprayer <https://www.hdHUDSON.com/product-page/bugwiser-sprayer> spread by a mop to spread the solution. The mop pad should be washed with bleach in the washing machine between uses.
- Disinfecting the floors with this alcohol solution should ideally happen prior to every class or rehearsal

What are some precautions that may need to be in place for dressing rooms and bathrooms?

- Until public health authorities have allowed phase 5 access per the **Return to Dancing and Training Considerations Due to-COVID-19** document, monitor areas where people can congregate
- Ensure enough room for social distancing and appropriate and frequent sanitizing measures in your dressing rooms and rest rooms
- If possible, ask dancers to arrive with dance clothes under street clothes
- In your bathrooms make sure that you can maintain social distance both inside and outside (decrease overall bathroom capacity)
 - Tape off waiting lines
 - Close a few stalls to decrease amount of people in any given space

What are considerations for lobby areas?

- Mark the waiting rooms and lobbies to section off space to allow for at least 6 feet of social distancing.
- Have available alcohol-based hand sanitizer in lobby and waiting areas.
- Consider asking anyone coming with a dancer to wait in their car instead of the lobby. Dancers waiting for their next rehearsal time or class time can also wait in their cars or outside and can be texted when the room has been sanitized and is ready for use.

What happens if we discover a case of COVID-19 in our community once reopened at any phase of reintegration?

- Dancers or staff who become ill while at work need to be isolated immediately and should seek advice and care from their health care provider.
 - The studio and all surfaces areas where the individual was should be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly.
- Dancers and staff who are well, but who live with someone with COVID-19, should notify their supervisor and quarantine for 14 days after last exposure. Follow the CDC guidelines <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/index.html>
- If a case of COVID-19 is confirmed:
 - The studios and company need to halt operations for 5 days

- Wait 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting to minimize potential for further exposure during cleaning. Ventilate the area if possible. Follow CDC guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
- Depending on the state, public health authorities may engage in contact tracing which occurs through the physician office. To protect patient privacy, contacts are only informed that they may have been exposed to a patient with the infection. They are not told the identity of the patient who may have exposed them per the CDC.

Remember that everything is changing day to day, stay up to date with current guidelines by CDC, WHO and your public health authorities and local government.

Additional Resources:

- Preparing the workplace
 - <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3990.pdf>
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/businesses-employers.html>
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community/workplace-decision-tree.pdf>
- United State Olympic and paralympic committee- Guidance: Return to training and sport event planning
 - <https://www.teamusa.org/coronavirus>
- NCAA- Core Principles of Resocialization in Collegiate Sports
 - <http://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/core-principles-resocialization-collegiate-sport>
- OSHA Standards in the workplace
 - <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/standards.html>
- CDC- Use of cloth face coverings
 - https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html?fbclid=IwAR2miaZeJZU4DL69VInKmCwgk0FjVuNLml_Xg8YSTCD1BucvtB67swmmt2k
- The Risks- Know Them- Avoid Them
 - <https://www.erinbromage.com/post/the-risks-know-them-avoid-them?fbclid=IwAR21FMRzwMH5is8XXff5dK4azOtz6B3wSIOXgZA3kDpuoqLw7G8su0vJ4i0>
 - <https://quillette.com/2020/04/23/covid-19-superspreader-events-in-28-countries-critical-patterns-and-lessons/>

Written by Heather Southwick, PT, MSPT, Selina Shah, MD, FACP, FAMSSM, Kathleen Bower, PT, DPT, Kathleen Davenport, MD (2020)

Disclaimer: The information on FAQ for COVID-19 contained in this paper is intended to help guide and inform the dancer. It is not meant to take the place of the advice of a medical professional.

This information is provided by Dance/USA Task Force on Dancer Health.