

## Instrumental Musician Guidelines during COVID-19

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Compiled by Ralph Manchester, edited by Deanna McBroom

- These guidelines for mitigation of the risk of playing musical instruments during COVID-19 are supplementary to any federal, state, local or institutional regulations.
- “Regardless of the various phased reopening plans that states, provinces, and communities have in place, legal reopening or congregating is not equivalent to safely singingtogether in the same physical space.”<sup>2,4</sup>The same concern applies to instrumental musicians.<sup>4</sup>
- These guidelines apply to any situation in which two or more musicians are in close proximity.
- These guidelines will be updated as new information becomes available.

### General recommendations

- Outdoor lessons/rehearsals/performances may pose a lower risk of disease transmission than indoor.
- Maintaining indoor ventilation that brings in outdoor air in lesson, rehearsal and performance spaces at or above 3 air exchanges per hour may reduce the risk of contagion. Consult with HVAC technicians for assistance.
- The use of UV light and HEPA (MERV 13 or higher) filters in indoor spaces may reduce the risk of contagion.
- No instrument sharing should occur without appropriate cleaning; SARS-CoV-2 can survive on some metal surfaces for 3 days or more, so simply letting an instrument sit overnight does not eliminate the virus.
- No sharing of sheet music, supplies, food, or other physical items.
- Consider dividing large groups into smaller ensembles to better allow for 6’ social distancing.
- No talking among participants. No loud talking; directors should consider using a microphone.
- Performers in straight rows, not curved toward the director.
- Participants don’t move within the space during rehearsal to reduce aerosol transmission.
- Stop music 5 minutes before rehearsal ends to allow aerosols to dissipate.
- Plan for safe social distancing as performers enter/leave the space.
- Create a disinfecting protocol for the space. Provide sanitation products for participants and dispose of them safely.
- Communicate expectations of compliance with safety protocols to participants and parents.
- Conduct a Covid-19 risk assessment at each lesson/rehearsal/performance. All should complete a symptom checklist prior to each session.

### Risk levels:

- **Blue:** no known increased risk over normal daily activities
- **Yellow:** probable increase in risk over normal daily activities
- **Red:** real world evidence of spread of disease associated with this activity

### Levels of evidence:

- Level 1: strong real-world research showing benefit of the recommendation for musicians
- Level 2: laboratory research showing benefit of the recommendation for musicians
- Level 3: expert opinion based on current public health advice and medical expertise

**Non-wind instruments**(strings, percussion, keyboard) – risk level **blue**, evidence level 3

- Six feet between musicians at all times
- Musicians wear a face covering

**Wind instruments** (all brass and woodwinds) – risk level **yellow**, evidence level 2

- Six feet between musicians at all times, nine feet in front of trombones
- Musicians wear a slitted surgical face mask while playing (vs a non-slitted mask when not actively playing the instrument)
  - o A Win-D-Fender is an acceptable alternative to a slitted face mask for the C flute.
- A multi-layer fabric covering is placed over the end/bell of the instrument.
  - o The bell cover of a French horn may be slitted to allow the right hand to be in position.
- No mouthpiece sharing
- No forcible “blow out” to remove liquid from the instrument
- Liquid drainage from brass instruments is collected on an absorbent pad that is removed and safely disposed of at the end of the lesson/rehearsal/performance
- Drying cloths for woodwind instruments are kept in a container during the lesson/rehearsal/performance and safely laundered/cleaned after use
- Rehearsals should be no more than 30 minutes before taking at least a “1 air exchange” break (during which all musicians leave the room).
- Consider testing wind instrumentalists periodically.

**References**

- <sup>1</sup>University of Colorado-Boulder/University of Maryland Aerosol and Airflow Studies preliminary results (July/August 2020). Preliminary results can be found at:  
July 13 summary and slides -<https://www.nfhs.org/media/4029971/preliminary-recommendations-from-international-performing-arts-aerosol-study.pdf> and  
<https://www.nfhs.org/media/4029974/preliminary-testing-report-7-13-20.pdf>  
August 6 summary and slides - <https://www.nfhs.org/articles/second-round-of-performing-arts-aerosol-study-produces-encouraging-preliminary-results/> and  
<https://www.nfhs.org/media/4119369/aerosol-study-prelim-results-round-2-final-updated.pdf>
- <sup>2</sup>Covid-19 Interim Guidance for Choral Organizations (June 2020) by a partnership of National Association of Teachers of Singing, American Choral Directors Association, Chorus America, and Barbershop Harmony Society
- <sup>3</sup>American Choral Directors Association’s COVID-19 Response Committee Report (June 2020)
- <sup>4</sup>expert opinion based on current public health advice and medical expertise