

These guidelines are meant to assist music educators, within and outside of the education system, amateur or professional vocalists, instrumentalists and organizers of music groups to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Singing and playing wind instruments may produce respiratory droplets and aerosols. However, it is unclear how much this additionally contributes to the transmission of COVID-19. Despite a number of reports linking COVID-19 outbreaks and super-spreader events to singing, studies have been unable to conclude whether the transmission risk relates to singing or other contributing factors associated with musical events and activities such as:

- crowds
- contact for long periods of time
- social interaction
- sharing equipment
- singing in enclosed spaces with poor ventilation

Although playing wind instruments have not been associated with super-spreader events, there remains the potential risk for COVID-19 transmission through the respiratory droplets and aerosols produced while playing wind instruments.

As evidence regarding transmission risk continues to evolve, the following guidelines have been developed, and will be revised as needed, to guide vocalists and instrumentalists in taking measures to protect themselves and others.

General guidelines:

- [Focus on the fundamentals](#). Check yourself for symptoms every day, stay home when you are sick (even if symptoms are mild), get tested if you have symptoms of COVID-19, practice proper and frequent hand hygiene, maintain physical distancing and wear a mask when physical distancing is not possible, or where required. For more information on symptoms and testing guidance, use the [COVID-19 Screening Tool](#).
- Get vaccinated for COVID-19 as soon as eligible.
- Review and follow current [Public Health Orders](#), including if performances are allowed.
- People at higher risk of serious illness (including people with chronic health conditions, a weakened immune system or people aged 60 years or older) may consider postponing these activities, when they involve other people, during periods of high COVID-19 transmission in the community.
- Continue to offer or explore virtual opportunities for those who are not able or prefer not to attend in-person.
- Performers and audiences should follow gathering size limits where applicable.
- Rehearse in separate, smaller sub-groups and limit the number of different groups in which you participate, to minimize risk of exposure to COVID-19.
- Give preference to outdoor sites for classes, rehearsals or events to further minimize risk. If the activity is indoors, minimize the time that people are together. There is currently no evidence on a specific amount of time that is safe.

- Ensure that ventilation systems are operating and functioning properly. If possible, increase ventilation by opening windows. Allow a break between groups for air exchange in the room, with the time frame between groups based on the room's air exchange. Portable HEPA filters may be considered, but are not suitable for all rooms and situations. Consult an HVAC professional to determine if a portable HEPA filter is suitable for the space. For more information, visit the Public Health Agency of Canada's [Guidance on Indoor Ventilation during the Pandemic](#) page.
- Ensure there are hand sanitizers on site, in the rehearsal rooms or in performance settings. At minimum, hand hygiene should be performed on entry and at exit of the rehearsal room or performance area.
- Individuals should bring their own pre-filled water bottles. Water bottles should not be shared. If water is provided in cups, they should not be refilled.

Physical Distancing:

- Use a large space that can accommodate physical distancing. Physical distancing is important for both indoor and outdoor settings. Consider placing floor markers as visual cues.
- Seating or standing arrangements should ideally allow for at least a two-metre/six-foot separation between chairs and participants. The space for physical distancing should also take instruments into consideration. The length of a person's instrument should be considered an extension of that person, and should be accounted for when determining the space between people.
- In addition to the physical spacing, stagger peoples' positions, so they are not directly in front of each other. Have people face away from others, or all face in the same direction, while singing or playing wind instruments.
- Increasing the minimum distance between the audience and the performers is strongly recommended. Consider blocking off the front two rows of seating. Risk may increase if the audience participates by singing along, cheering or yelling.
- If live music is used for ambiance, consider the volume of the music. Lower music volume may allow the other individuals present to more consistently practice physical distancing, as they will not lean in towards one other or talk louder to hear one other.

Cleaning and Disinfecting:

- Facilities, including commonly touched surfaces, should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after use. Cleaning and disinfection must be done with [Health Canada approved disinfectants](#) that kill viruses.
- Sharing of equipment (e.g. music stands, microphones, amplifiers, mixers, chairs, pens or pencils) and sheet music or devices with electronic sheet music is discouraged. If they are shared, hand hygiene should be performed before and after use. Disinfectant wipes should be available for frequent cleaning and disinfection before and after use. Items must be stored properly to prevent contamination (e.g. stored in a clean and disinfected container). Frequency and additional cleaning and disinfection information can be found on the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) site.
- Uniforms or gowns should not be shared and should be **laundered after each use**.

Masks:

- Mask wearing is recommended in indoor public settings to prevent transmission of COVID-19. Check the current [public health orders](#) for additional details on settings where masks are required.
- The [Mask Guidance for Manitobans](#) site includes instructions for proper use of masks and additional information.
- Masks can be temporarily removed while playing a wind instrument, but should be worn while playing other instruments and while singing.
- Wind instrument players should only remove their masks immediately before playing. Masks should be put back on after they have finished playing. Hand hygiene must be performed before and after putting on the mask.
- Masks designed with slits to fit mouthpieces are not specifically recommended, as their impact on the risk of transmission is unknown. If used, these masks should **NOT** be worn outside of the performance space, and must be replaced with an unaltered mask immediately after playing. Masks that are not specifically designed for playing wind instruments should not be altered by cutting a hole in them. Gapping holes may increase the spread of respiratory droplets and aerosols.

Specific considerations for instrumentalists:

- Consider the placement of instruments in the room based on their risk of droplet and aerosol release (e.g., flutes placed where exhalation would not be directed at other musicians).
- Instruments, including accessories (e.g. drumsticks, mallets and guitar picks) should not be shared. If shared access to instruments and accessories is required, then they need to be thoroughly cleaned as per standard protocol for the instrument, after each use and between users. As well, hand hygiene should be performed before and after use.
- Mouthpieces should not be shared.
- Masks or bell covers for instruments can be used and may prevent the release of droplets and aerosols during playing. An alternative for flutes is a pop screen in front of the mouthpiece that may reduce forward projection of droplets and aerosols. Fabric covers and pop screens should be placed in a closed plastic bag and laundered between each use with hot water and soap.
- Regular cleaning of instruments, mouthpieces and accessories, as per standard protocol, is essential. Instrument brushes should be used where applicable. Do not share cleaning cloths or instrument brushes.
- Cleaning of individual instruments with saliva build-up should be done outside of the group setting to reduce the risk of exposure.
- For instruments where the cleaning process involves blowing into the instrument to clear out the accumulated saliva, empty valves away from others by blowing into a cloth or closed container to collect the liquid, or onto a disposable absorbent pad. The cloth should be disposed of immediately or placed in a closed plastic bag for laundering. While doing this, ensure that you are alone. If others are present, ensure they are wearing masks and are distanced at least two metres/six feet from you. And potentially consider using a barrier (e.g. plexiglass) to separate yourself from others. If a barrier is used, it needs to be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected after use and stored properly to prevent contamination.
- Perform hand hygiene prior to and after cleaning your instrument or handling your mask or bell cover for the instrument.