

COVID-19 - Guidelines for Vocalists and Instrumentalists

The COVID-19 pandemic has led us to reconsider our typical practices and how they may contribute to the transmission of infection. Music is an important part of society and integral to many cultural practices. This guideline is meant to assist amateur or professional vocalists, instrumentalists and organizers of music groups.

There have been multiple reports globally where participation in a choir has been associated as an event that led to the spread of COVID-19 to many people (also called a 'super-spreader' event).

As part of [Restoring Safe Services: Phase Two](#), choirs or musical theatre activities should not be allowed, due to a higher risk of transmission through singing compared to speaking. Infected people may transmit the virus over greater distances through their saliva or respiratory droplets while singing and when playing certain instruments such as wind or brass instruments. As the evidence for assessing the risk of these activities is still not well understood, the following guidelines have been established to guide vocalists and instrumentalists in taking measures to protect themselves and others.

General guidelines:

- Individuals should not participate in these activities when ill, even if symptoms are mild. Visit www.manitoba.ca/covid19/about/index.html for a list of symptoms.
- Individuals at higher risk of serious illness (including individuals with chronic health conditions, a weakened immune system or people aged 60 years or older) may consider waiting to return to these activities when they involve other people.
- Virtual opportunities should continue to be offered or should be explored for those who are not able to attend, or who may prefer to participate in these activities from home. Use alternatives such as pre-recorded audio or video or virtual training or recording sessions.
- Performers and audiences should follow gathering size limitations. Preference should be given to outdoor sites for events to further minimize risk. The number of vocalists and instrumentalists should be limited to soloists or small groups.
- If the activity is indoors, minimize the time that individuals are together. There is currently no evidence on a specific amount of time that is safe. If possible, increase ventilation by opening windows.
- Where applicable, organizers (whether it be a practice or performance) should maintain a list of individuals present and contact information for at least 21 days to enable public health contact tracing, if needed.
- Seating or standing arrangements should allow for at least two metre/six feet separation

between chairs and participants. The space for physical distancing also needs to take into consideration instruments that are played by blowing air into it. The length of these instruments should be considered as an extension of the individual and accounted for when determining spacing between individuals. In addition to the physical spacing, stagger the positions of individuals. Consider placing floor markers as a visual cue. This minimum sitting or standing separation is not required for members of the same household.

- A minimum distance of two metres/six feet is also required between the vocalist(s) and/or musician(s) and other individuals including the conductor and spectators.
- Have people face away from others while singing or playing instruments that are played by blowing air into it.
- Consider placing a physical barrier in front of the vocalist or musician as another way to reduce risk of transmission. The barrier needs to be thoroughly cleaned/disinfected after each use.
- Ensure access to hand hygiene stations are readily available.
- If indoor facilities are used, there should be a single point of entry.
- Facilities, including commonly touched surfaces, should be thoroughly cleaned/disinfected after use. Cleaning/disinfection must be done with Health Canada approved disinfectants that kill viruses.
- Individuals should bring their own pre-filled water bottle. Water bottles should not be shared. If water is provided in cups, they should not be refilled.
- Equipment (e.g. music stands, microphones) and sheet music or devices with electronic sheet music should not be shared. If they are shared, disinfectant wipes should be available for frequent cleaning/disinfection.
- Uniforms or gowns should not be shared and should be laundered after each use.
- If live music is being used for ambiance, consider the volume of the music. Lower music volume may allow the other individuals present to more consistently practice physical distancing so that they are not prone to leaning in towards each other or talking louder to hear each other.

Specific considerations for instrumentalists:

- Instruments, including accessories (e.g. drum sticks, 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.
- Mouthpieces should not be shared.
- 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, do this into a disposable container/trashcan and not onto the floor. While doing this, ensure that people 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/disinfected after use.
- Perform hand hygiene after cleaning your instrument.