



## COVID-19 Guidance for Singing, Voice Projection, and Playing of Musical Instruments

Emerging evidence about the spread of COVID-19 suggests that activities related to performing arts, such as singing, speaking loudly, and playing instruments in close proximity to others without mitigation measures, carry an elevated risk compared to other activities. The Division of Public Health (DPH) offers the following guidance for mitigating the inherent risks of singing, voice projection, yelling and playing certain musical instruments indoors, in crowded settings and in settings with vulnerable populations. Wearing a face covering, using instrument coverings and social distancing more than 6 feet can help mitigate the spread of infection when people speak, project their voices, yell, sing or play musical instruments.

### Background:

Evidence suggests that COVID-19 is spread easily from person to person through airborne respiratory droplets of varying sizes. COVID-19 can spread from one person to another even if the person does not show any symptoms of the disease. Case studies have highlighted particular risk of choirs who did not mitigate risk, and evidence shows speaking loudly can yield significant droplets that are capable of spreading the virus.

Infection spread depends on many factors, including whether people are inside or outdoors, how loudly and how much people are speaking, whether they are wearing masks, how closely spaced people are from one another and how well-ventilated a room is. Activities such as youth sports, swimming, and performing arts present many situations where voice projection or yelling is common. Examples of this may be coaches yelling instructions to athletes, lifeguards shouting instructions to swimmers, or musicians singing to a small group of people or in a small intimate setting. Individuals participating in these activities should take steps to protect themselves and one another from spreading the virus.

Recent research on the aerosolization of particles from playing wind and brass instruments suggested several mitigation strategies specific to instrumental music, including a focus on performing with face coverings, ensuring distance between performers, limiting practice or play time, increasing air flow, and promoting hygiene to mitigate risk related to performing arts.

### Guidance:

Consistent with the [Governor's 27<sup>th</sup> Modification to the State of Emergency](#) related to the use of face coverings, signed on Sept. 4, 2020, to mitigate disease transmission, and guidance from the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) guidance (<https://www.nfhs.org/media/3812337/2020-nfhs-guidance-for-returning-to-high-school-marching-band-activities.pdf>) DPH recommends that performers, singers, and musicians follow these safety precautions.

#### Consistently Wear Appropriate Face Coverings

- Wear a mask when in contact with other people outside of the home. [Always follow Delaware requirements on the use of face coverings](#) consistent with the [Governor's 27<sup>th</sup> Modification to the State of Emergency](#).
- Instead of utilizing choirs, consider using recorded music or a song leader who is wearing a face covering and is standing at least 6 feet away from other individuals, or is at least 13 feet away from other individuals if not wearing a face covering.
- Face coverings must be worn consistent with the Governor's Declaration of a State of Emergency and its modifications. If face coverings are not available or cannot be used, the speaker, reader, or singer is



required to maintain at least thirteen (13) feet of distance between themselves and the audience, face away from the audience, or stand behind a physical barrier. If removed for speaking or singing, face coverings must be put on immediately after speaking, reading, or singing. For playing brass and wind instruments:

- Masks must be worn in accordance with the Governor's Declaration of a State of Emergency and its modifications. Personal masks with an opening for instrument play should be well-fitting, multi-layered, washable or disposable, and surgical in style and should have a velcro closure to cover the hole or be switched out before or after with a clean covering.
- Instrument bell covers should be used in all settings. Ideally, bell covers should be made of non-stretchy material that has a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) of 13 – a rating known to protect against cough and sneeze, bacteria and virus particles. However, any type of covering is better than nothing.

#### Practice Adequate Social Distancing

- When you are outside of your home, stay at least 6 feet away from those not in your immediate family, even when wearing a face covering.
- Consider limiting rehearsal times to 30 minutes or less to reduce the quantity and spread of aerosol among the individuals involved.
- Band members should ensure 6 feet between any performers. Everyone should face the same direction. Band leaders should encourage allowing 9 feet by 6 feet for trombone players as it is a larger instrument that extends three feet away from the player.

#### Ensure a Safe Environment

- Outdoor rehearsals for singing or playing music allows for optimal air flow. Facilities should consider open-air tents with high rooftops and without walls.
- Per best practice recommendations, playing should stop for approximately five minutes after each 30-minute segment to allow the aerosolized particles to disperse.
- Following an indoor rehearsal, activity leaders should wait until minimum of one HVAC air change before using the room again, ideally with three air changes.
- Seats or contact surfaces in front of and within 15' of the singers should be disinfected prior to use.
- HEPA filters are strongly recommended for indoor spaces. Additional guidance can be found on the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) website: <https://www.ashrae.org>.

#### Promote Cleaning, Disinfecting, and Hygiene Practices

- Rooms and common spaces should be cleaned and disinfected on a routine basis. High touch surfaces must be cleaned and disinfected as required by the Governor's Declaration of a State of Emergency and its modifications.
- Encourage individuals to practice hand hygiene with access to handwashing facilities or hand sanitizer.
- Musicians who play instruments with spit valves should use absorbent pads to empty the valves rather than empty them directly onto the floor.

More information for school-based performing arts go to: <https://www.nfhs.org/articles/second-round-of-performing-arts-aerosol-study-produces-encouraging-preliminary-results/>.