

## Return to Dancing and Training Considerations Due to-COVID-19

*The Task Force on Dancer Health is dedicated to protecting the health and safety of dancers and their company settings. The purpose of this paper is to provide resources and information companies can use to help them develop return-to-studio protocols in the context of COVID-19. The information contained in this document is not meant to substitute for medical diagnosis and treatment and should be used for informational purposes only. These considerations are not meant to be prescriptive, but rather informative to help individual companies create their own return-to-studio protocol based on their situation and the stipulations put in place by their local public health authorities and governments. Governments may be making decisions for reopening based on weighing economics, politics and health. **However, as the Task Force on Dancer Health, we strongly recommend making these decisions based on medical advice. As a result, your studio phase may lag behind the local government phase in reopening.** You may need to adhere to stricter protocols to keep your company healthy and safe so they can perform when appropriate. The links provided in this document should also be referred to as the information on COVID-19 continues to change rapidly.*

### Basic Concepts:

*Dancers and staff with medical conditions that place them at higher risk should not participate during this transition period.*

- *Be aware of COVID-19 symptoms (Appendix A) and check the CDC website for updates <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>*
- *Dancers who have traveled back to their company city should quarantine in isolation for 14 days before coming to the studios.*
- *Dancers and staff should continue to limit exposure outside of the home to essential needs such as grocery shopping, healthcare, and dance*
- *Dancers and staff should only be at the studios if feeling completely well with no symptoms of illness.*
- *Temperature checks using a no-touch forehead thermometer must be conducted daily for every individual before entering the studio. Review Appendix A for of signs and symptoms of COVID-19*
- *If a dancer or staff member has had COVID-19, they will need a clearance note from a doctor to return to the studios*
- *Social distancing recommendations in general become significantly greater when dancers and athletes are exercising indoors. Being in an enclosed, indoor space, sharing the same air for a prolonged period of time (> than 10 minutes) increases the chances of exposure and infection. Standard social distancing guidelines of 6 feet are not as effective as the time of exposure is increased and even a low dose of virus is within the air.*
- *All dancers and staff need to behave as if they are an asymptomatic carrier of COVID-19 to help reduce risk that asymptomatic individuals are infecting an enclosed environment.*
- *Companies need to be prepared with the appropriate PPE supplies and staffing for multiple cleanings per day of common spaces. Touch areas need to be specifically attended to such as elevator buttons, door handles, ballet barres, copy and fax machines, stair railings, and bathrooms/dressing room areas. Cleaning supplies and hand sanitizer must be sufficient to maintain a safe working environment with cleanings multiple times/day.*

- *Bleach solutions or alcohol solutions with at least 70% isopropyl alcohol or 60% ethanol can be used. Refer to the CDC cleaning recommendations for further details and other cleaning and disinfecting guidelines: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>*
- *Please see TFODH informational paper on COVID-19 FAQ for dancers and dance companies returning to the studios for suggestions on cleaning vinyl dance floors because bleach should not be used on marley.*

## **Phases for returning to the studios:**

**Phase 1:** Public health authorities mandate shelter in place and studios are closed.

- Dancers train at home (see TFODH informational paper on Ideas for staying in shape during social isolation restrictions)
- Classes occur virtually
- Dancers and staff leave home only for essential work or errands and always follow infection prevention protocols (Appendix B)

**Phase 2:** Public health authorities begin to lift shelter-in-place requirements, but continue to prohibit group activities. Public training facilities remain closed

- Dancers continue training at home (see TFODH informational paper on Ideas for staying in shape during social isolation restrictions)
- Classes occur virtually
- Dancers and staff leave home only for essential work or errands and always follow infection prevention protocols (Appendix B)

**Phase 3:** Public health authorities allow small group activities (< 10 people), but public training facilities remain closed

- Dancers continue with some training at home, but small groups may be allowed in the studio with social distancing measures in place
- Criteria for participation in group training sessions
  - No signs or symptoms of COVID-19 (Appendix A) in the past 14 days
  - If a dancer or staff member has had COVID-19, then they will need a clearance note from their doctor to return to the studios
  - Dancers who have traveled back to their company city should quarantine in isolation for 14 days before coming to the studios. Training should continue in the home.
  - No close or sustained contact with anyone who is sick within 14 days of starting group training
  - Temperature check and symptom check outside of the studio both recorded for each dancer and staff member in a log
    - Use no-touch thermometer and if temperature is > than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, the individual must go home, monitor symptoms, and contact a physician
    - Ask about symptoms from Appendix A and record in log. If any symptoms are present, then the individual must return home and contact a physician
- Dancers should maintain a distance of at least 6 feet apart, but preferably 10 feet apart if possible, as there is some research showing that the breath from exercise can carry the virus greater distances. Safe distances have not been determined for a dancer in a studio.
- Masks are required at all times inside the studio

- Minimize changes in small group participants
- No activities should be allowed that require direct or indirect contact including: partnering, tactile cueing, direct floor work, touching the same equipment or travelling across the floor.
- Frequent cleaning of studios and common spaces
  - Barres should be cleaned immediately after use
  - Floors and any other areas touched by anyone should be cleaned before the next class at a minimum. *Please see TFODH informational paper on COVID-19 FAQ for dancers and dance companies returning to the studios for suggestions on cleaning vinyl dance floors. Bleach should not be used on marley floors.*
  - Refer to the CDC cleaning recommendations for further details and other cleaning and disinfecting guidelines: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
- Dancers need to maintain social distancing in the dressing rooms. Showers on site should be discouraged. Dancers should try to enter and leave the studios with dance clothes under street clothes. The number of people in restrooms and dressing rooms needs to be limited to allow for social distancing and frequent cleaning.

**Phase 4:** Public health authorities allow larger groups up to 50 people to congregate

- Criteria for participation in group training sessions
  - No signs or symptoms of COVID-19 (Appendix A) in the past 14 days
  - If a dancer or staff member has had COVID-19, then they need a clearance note from their doctor to return to the studios
  - Dancers who have traveled back to their company city should quarantine in isolation for 14 days before coming to the studios and continue with training in their home.
  - No close or sustained contact with anyone who is sick within 14 days of starting group training
  - Temperature check and symptom check outside of the studio both recorded for each dancer and staff member in a log
    - Use no-touch thermometer and if temperature is > than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit then the individual must go home and monitor symptoms and contact a physician
    - Ask about symptoms from Appendix A and record in log. If any symptoms are present, then the individual must return home and contact a physician
- Dancers should maintain a distance of at least 6 feet apart, but preferably 10 feet apart if possible, as there is some research showing that the breath from exercise can carry the virus further. Safe distances have not been determined for a dancer in a studio.
- No activities that require direct or indirect contact including: partnering, tactile cueing, direct floor work or touching of the same equipment
- Precautions in place during phase 3 should continue except now movement across the room can occur. Dancers should maintain 6 feet distance apart from each other standing side by side in one line and allow each group to complete the combination to the end of the room prior to the next group starting.
- Common spaces such as rest rooms and dressing rooms still need to have distancing and frequent cleaning measures in place.

**Phase 5:** Public health authorities allow gyms and larger facilities to be open. No limitations on group size. Ideally, a vaccine is available.

- Continue educating staff and dancers regarding COVID-19 symptoms and if anyone has symptoms, he/she should not come to the studio

- Standard infection prevention measures continue such as frequent and effective hand washing, avoiding touching of the face
- Social distancing measures are no longer required
- Activities with direct and indirect contact are permitted including partnering

### Considerations for Social Distancing

- **Barre**
  - Dancers need to stand at least 6 feet (2 meters) apart or 43 square feet (4 square meters)
    - May want to mark this with tape
  - Wipe down the barre before and after each use
  - Dynamic exercises with larger movement should be avoided to minimize air turbulence in the room
- **Center Work**
  - For stationary center work, dancers should be able to maintain 8-10 feet distance
  - Normal breathing should be encouraged over forced breath cues, as forced exhalation spreads larger droplets farther distances
- **Across the Floor**
  - Dancers should avoid following right behind each other; it is safer to work next to each other. If dancers travel directly behind each other, they are in the slipstream where droplets remain suspended. To avoid contact, dancers need to allow even further distance.
  - Dancers should maintain 6 feet distance apart standing side by side in one line and allow each group to complete the combination to the end of the room before the next group starts.
  - Dancers should be reminded to maintain a distance of at least 6 feet when waiting to go across the floor and after completing the combination.
- **Air exchange & quality**
  - Open windows and doors to try to maximize improved air circulation
  - Consider a delay of at least 10 minutes between classes to allow for cleaning
  - As the virus is thought to be less virulent in humid conditions, monitor air conditioning and encourage a more humid environment
  - Avoid dancers exiting and entering the studios at the same time
- **Music**
  - Live musicians should be assigned to a consistent studio since disinfecting instruments may be difficult. Stationary instruments should be cleaned appropriately between musicians.
  - Sound equipment should be cleaned before and after use.
  - Consider the volume of music. The louder the music, the louder the instructor will have to project, potentially causing droplets to travel further.

## Considerations for infection prevention at the studios

- Frequent hand washing and use of disinfectant is essential both upon arrival and departure
- Face masks should be worn when social distancing is difficult for logistical reasons (onsite medical and physical therapy care, live musician in a studio, staff cleaning surfaces)
- Only individual and personal training equipment should be used (mats, stretch bands, etc.)
- All physical therapy equipment must be disinfected between uses. Dancers should not congregate in the company physical therapy spaces and gyms. The number of dancers permitted in these spaces may need to be limited depending on the phase of reintegration. Further precautions need to be in place to allow for clinicians to use PPE. Additionally, time should be allotted for full cleaning of the clinic between patients for stages 3 and 4 as it is difficult to promote social distancing precautions with physical therapy. On-site physical therapy treatment should be conducted via telehealth prior to stage 3.
- Cleaning should follow CDC recommendations at all times. Any areas that are frequently touched such as barres, door handles, light switches, elevator buttons, stair railings, floors, music controls or instruments should be cleaned multiple times daily.

## Additional Considerations

Companies need to consider the timing of their end goal. Does it make sense to bring dancers back into the studios to help condition them if it is not possible and safe to perform for audiences for months? There will need to be a period of time to help dancers fully recondition after such an extended and unusual layoff. Since dancers have had to condition in smaller spaces, on different floor surfaces, and with varied instruction, there will need to be an appropriate and graded progression back to full dancing that will require a minimum of 4-6 weeks depending on the company and the ability of the dancers to work on jumps, pointe and the upper body strength necessary for partnering.

*The information and recommendations regarding COVID-19 are constantly changing. Please refer to the adjunct paper titled: **COVID-19 FAQ for Dancers and Dance Companies Returning to the Studios**. Please also continue to refer to the CDC, OSHA, WHO and your local public health authorities to make the safest and most prudent decisions for your company.*

## 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=IwAR2miaZeJZU4DL69VlnKmCwgk0FjVuNLml\\_Xg8YSTCD1BucvtB67swmmt2k](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html?fbclid=IwAR2miaZeJZU4DL69VlnKmCwgk0FjVuNLml_Xg8YSTCD1BucvtB67swmmt2k)
- The Risks- Know Them- Avoid Them
  - <https://www.erinbromage.com/post/the-risks-know-them-avoid-them?fbclid=IwAR21FMRzwMH5is8XXff5dK4azOtz6B3wSIOXgZA3kDpuoqLw7G8su0vJ4j0>
  - <https://quillette.com/2020/04/23/covid-19-superspreader-events-in-28-countries-critical-patterns-and-lessons/>

#### References:

1. Anfinrud, P., Stadnytskyi, V., Bax, C. and Bax, A., 2020. Visualizing Speech-Generated Oral Fluid Droplets with Laser Light Scattering. *New England Journal of Medicine*,.
2. Blocken, B., Malizia, F., Van Druenen, T. and Marchal, T., 2020. [online] Urbanphysics.net. Available at: <[http://www.urbanphysics.net/COVID19\\_Aero\\_Paper.pdf](http://www.urbanphysics.net/COVID19_Aero_Paper.pdf)>

#### **Appendix A: COVID-19 signs and symptoms**

1. Fever > 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or 38 degrees Celsius
2. Cough, usually dry
3. Shortness of Breath
4. Sore Throat
5. Headache
6. Chills
7. Congestion
8. Muscle and joint pain that are unexplained
9. Nausea or vomiting
10. Loss of sense of smell
11. Diarrhea
12. Oxygen saturation of < 93% with a reliable pulse oximeter taken by a health care provider

## **Appendix B Infection prevention recommendations outside of the studio**

1. Stay more than 6 feet away from people who do not live with you in your home
2. Avoid touching your face
3. Frequently wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with a minimum of 70% isopropyl alcohol or 60% ethanol if your hands aren't soiled
  - a. Wash hands after returning home from activities outside of the home
  - b. Wash before handling food
  - c. Wash after using the restroom
  - d. Wash after touching your face for any reason
  - e. Clean hands before and after shopping
4. Clean purchased items with soap and water if possible or disinfect when possible with a bleach or alcohol based solution. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html>
5. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing dispose of tissue in trash, and then wash your hands or use hand sanitizer. If no tissue, sanitizer, or wash area is available then please cough or sneeze into elbow and avoid contacting the elbow until your shirt can be changed or the elbow can be washed
6. Frequently clean commonly touched surfaces (ie: doorknobs, keyboards, counters, telephones) with antiseptic cleaner
7. Wear a facemask outside of your home or if you have symptoms of respiratory illness such as cough, runny nose, or shortness of breath
8. Stay home if you are sick and call your healthcare provider for further recommendations

***Disclaimer: The information on returning to dance and training 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.***

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