



MASK Wearing in Dance

Tuesday 11 August 2020

When there is community transmission of COVID-19:

- Masks may reduce the spread of COVID-19
- Masks are safe to use during dance activity
- Masks are optional but encouraged but do not reduce the need to maintain distancing, hand hygiene and ventilation
- Masks should be strongly encouraged where distancing cannot be maintained eg partner dance and the need for partner dancing/close contact should be reconsidered.

BACKGROUND

Any activity in an enclosed space can increase the risk of infection. Appropriate face masks may provide some reduction of risk to dancers and instructors alongside physical distancing, hand hygiene and other COVID19 safety measures including those outlined in the Guidance Notes for Dance Activity from Ausdance NSW.

It is important to note that wearing face masks DOES NOT substitute or reduce the need for the primary safety measures such as consideration of airflow, ventilation, physical distancing and hand hygiene.

The scientific research is rapidly evolving as we learn more about COVID19 and how it spreads. The risk is also dependent on the amount of community transmission at any given time. Therefore it is important to stay up-to-date with the latest safety guidance via the relevant state Government Health website: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/default.aspx>

Some points to consider regarding COVID 19:

- COVID19 is mostly droplet-spread (touch, close contact). An aerosol (in the air) component is also considered probable.
- It may persist on surfaces for a number of days
- The increased rate, depth and force of breathing during exercise may increase the risk of aerosolization (fine droplets spread in the air) and risk of transmission
- Up to 50% of transmission occurs in asymptomatic individuals
- Indoors, duration of exposure, stagnant air and close proximity appears to increase risk of infection

Masks do not guarantee protection of infection, rather they probably work by reducing spread by *asymptomatic individuals* where physical distancing is difficult to be maintained.

INTERNATIONAL RETURN TO DANCE GUIDELINES

The UK return to dance guidelines explicitly mention face coverings, and are not currently recommended (accessed 20/7/20) despite the fact that they have far higher community transmission than in Australia.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/performing-arts>

The Australian Institute of Sport framework does not address nor recommend the use of masks in sport.

https://www.ais.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/730374/35845_AIS-Framework-for-Rebooting-Sport-Summary.pdf

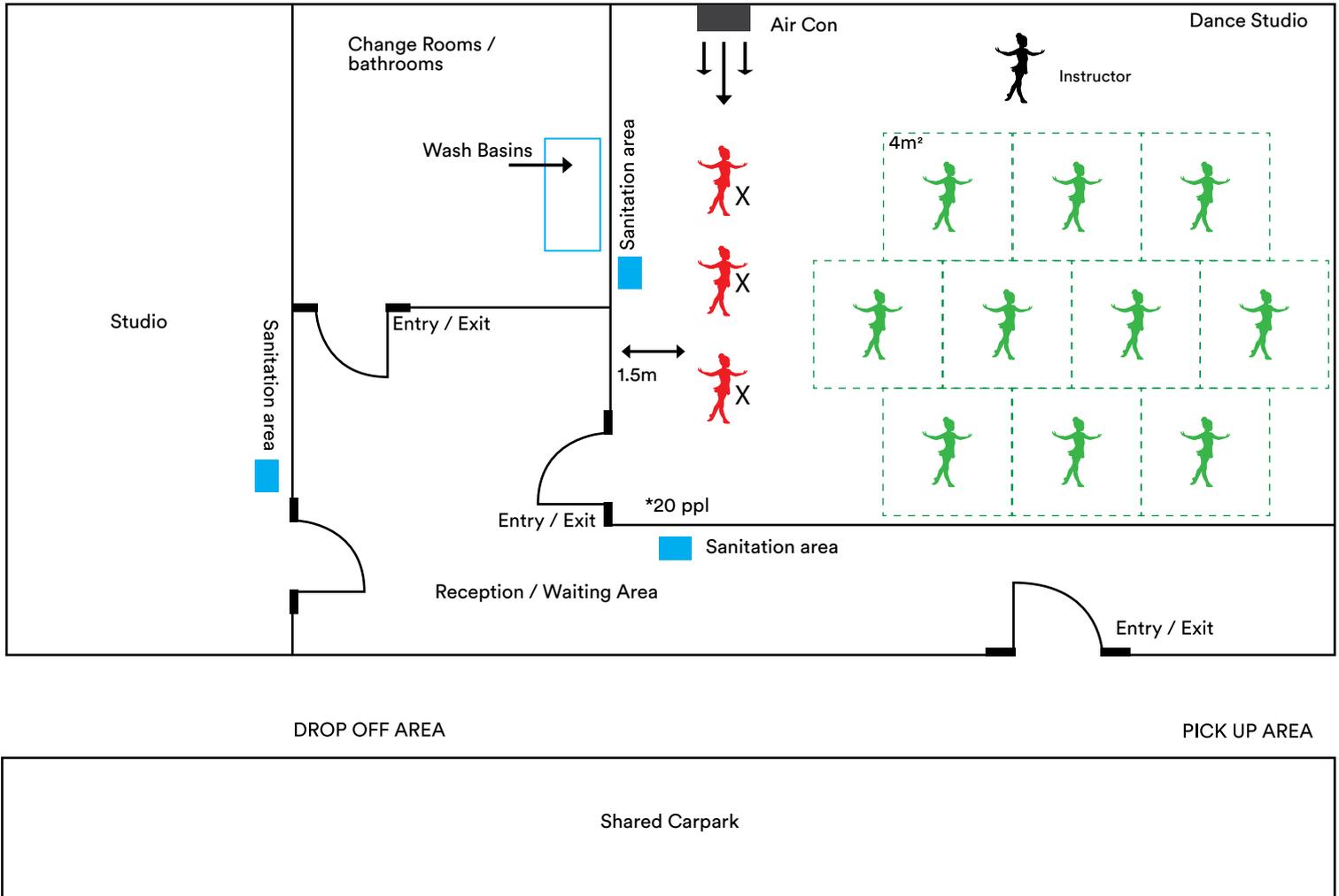
There is no robust evidence for many interventions and this guidance is based on best available evidence and expert opinion and takes a precautionary principle.

PRINCIPLES FOR INTERACTION IN DANCE CLASS

The principles listed below should be prioritised in dance settings whether individuals wear masks or not;

- Consider the use of voice amplification technology to reduce vocal effort (less droplet spread) and/or reducing music volume in dance classes.
- Consider the physical arrangement of class activity e.g. set travelling steps starting from alternating sides and finishing away from starting position to minimise slipstreaming effect and panting post exertion near others.
- Consider having set groups which do not change week to week to limit potential spread eg no swapping classes, and within each class having smaller groups which do all their travelling steps together/use the same barre – this is to reduce the possible contacts of each individual
- Ensure adequate ventilation of the facility / room
 - Be mindful of air-conditioning/fan direction and minimise number of participants lined up in that airflow path
 - If there is an exhaust fan, use it

Single Facility / Area in Shared Premises



- Avoid unintentional / unnecessary contact
- Personnel are to be conscientious of physical distancing measures minimum 4 m² per dancer
- No sharing of equipment, food, drink bottles
- Regular sanitisation be promoted and normalised. Personnel should role model this behaviour
- Ensure adequate time between classes to clean the space, and allow ventilation of the room ie, avoid running back to back classes

PARTNER DANCE/CONTACT

- Partner dance and contact in dance activity must be considered higher risk, due to proximity and potentially deep(er) breathing
- Participants should be made aware of this and consent to it.
- Where participants wish to participate in partner dance, and it is practical, mask wearing should be encouraged

MASK TYPES

N95/P2 respirator masks

- NOT recommended for non-medical use. They are expensive and in short supply and should be reserved for medical personnel and other essential workers
- Single use – will get expensive and generate large amounts of waste
- Requires fit testing to be effective

Surgical Mask

- NOT recommended for community use.
- Single use – will get expensive and generate large amounts of waste

Cloth masks/face coverings

- Recommended for community use
- Variable construction with differences in material type, construction, fit
 - o Suggest at least 2 layers, however something is better than nothing
 - Avoid bandanna type coverings – some initial work suggests they break up large droplets into smaller ones, facilitating greater dispersion.
 - o Ensure it's comfortable to minimise temptation to fiddle
 - o Try and find one which fits snugly without large gaps around the face

Avoid masks with an exhalation valve – these do not filter your breath out and does not protect the people around you.

How to make a cloth mask: Instructions for making a cloth face mask, Victorian State Government can be downloaded [here](#).

CONSIDERATIONS OF MASK USE

- It appears that children (<12) are less likely to catch/transmit COVID and may also have a harder time with masks so the benefit is less certain but should be individualised.
- Masks should not be used in the under 2.
- Masks should not be adjusted/touched once put on face
- If it is touched, implement hand hygiene immediately
- Using a mask during physical activity may take some getting used to. Try to gradually increase time exposure to mask use from low intensity through to high intensity
 - o Could do this in class starting from warm ups, to centre before wearing during more aerobic travelling steps/jumps
 - o Can also be done as a home activity – go for a walk around the block in a mask, increase to brisk walk, run

- Consider how to manage masks after use – either keep on until back in their own car, or drop immediately into a sealable bag and implement hand hygiene protocols as described in the guidance notes
- Once wet through, they are less effective and should be changed however:
 - o Dancer needs to be able to remove the mask without further contamination of themselves or the environment. If that cannot be achieved, it is likely better to leave the mask on
 - o For fulltime schools, or multiple classes in a row, participants may need several masks and a way to store them safely
- Masks should be washed daily and preferably ironed.
- Masks may be difficult to wear for people with trauma or anxiety
 - o It is important to be aware and compassionate
 - o As it stands, masks are optional
 - o Many people with trauma and anxiety have managed to acclimatise to mask wearing
 - o Consider seeking medical and psychological support
 - o Some things which may help are
 - Trying different materials and styles of mask
 - Trying them on for short periods in safe spaces first
 - Gradually incorporate them into daily life and dance activity
 - Breathing exercises (appendix 1)
- For hearing impaired participants, facemasks significantly impair their ability to lip read – please be mindful of this and work with them as needed to facilitate their participation
 - o Some resources from deafvictoria.org.au

When to stop/pause/seek help/remove mask:

- Feeling lightheaded or dizzy
- Hyperventilating/hard to catch breath
- Looking pale
- Confusion or looking lethargic
- Reduced consciousness

- **Will wearing a mask cause a lack of oxygen/excess build up of carbon dioxide?**
 - o No. Masks are safe, and will not result in hypoxia (less oxygen). There is a long history of athletes using masks safely. However as noted, there will be some acclimatisation needed
- **Wearing a mask fogs up my glasses**
 - o Fogging is a common problem, this article has some handy tips
<https://theconversation.com/13-insider-tips-on-how-to-wear-a-mask-without-your-glasses-fogging-up-getting-short-of-breath-or-your-ears-hurting-143001>
- **When should a mask be changed?**
 - o When it is wet through – with the caveat is that the dancer is able to do it safely without contaminating themselves or the environment.
- **Single use masks seem very wasteful**
 - o It is! Use a reusable cloth mask
- **How and when do I clean a fabric mask?**
 - o You should wash it daily in warm, soapy water, and preferably iron dry
https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/202007/Design%20and%20preparation%20of%20cloth%20mask_0.pdf
- **I found a mask with a exhaust valve which lets me breathe easier?**
 - o Avoid these as it does not filter your breath out and does not protect the people around you.
- **I'm getting maskne (mask acne)!**
 - o Cotton/natural materials may be better.
 - o Changing frequently before it gets very wet may be better
- **I'm in a regional area with no known cases, should I wear a mask?**
 - o Mask wearing is optional and should be a decision made relevant to your local conditions and guidance.
- **Wearing a mask makes me look scary**
 - o There are lots of fun designs available
 - o Teaching with a mask does take more work and more energy with facial and vocal expressions.
 - o Whilst it is a new phenomenon in Australia, mask wearing has become commonplace around the world.
- **Masks may be difficult to wear for people with trauma or anxiety**
 - o It is important to be aware and compassionate
 - o As it stands, masks are optional
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 - o Consider seeking medical and psychological support
 - o Some things which may help are
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OTHER RESOURCES

World Health Organisation

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/when-and-how-to-use-masks>

British Journal of Sports Medicine

<https://blogs.bmj.com/bjbm/2020/06/12/should-people-wear-a-face-mask-during-exercise-what-should-clinicians-advise/>

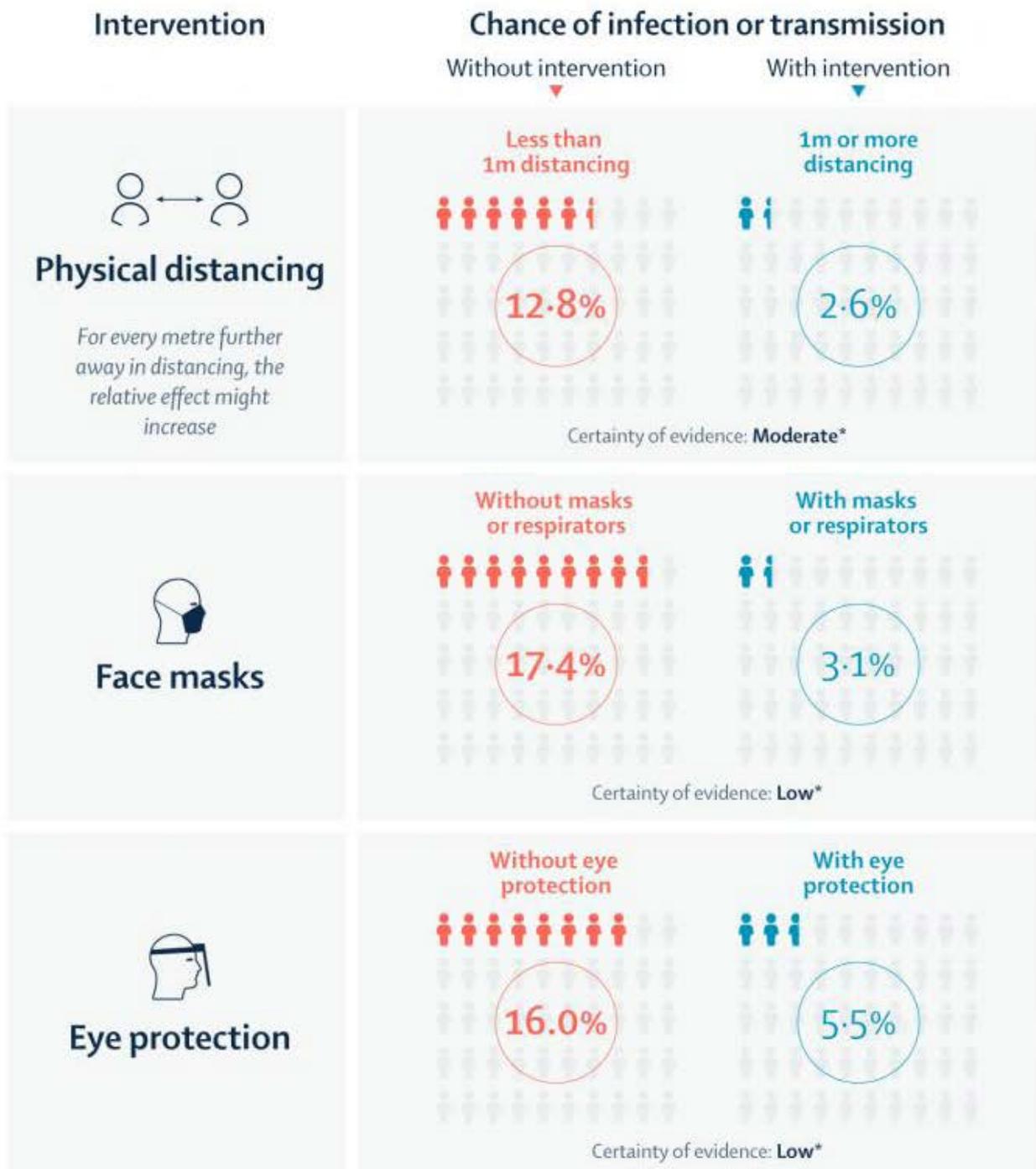
United States CDC

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>

APPENDIX 1

If you feel anxious when wearing a mask, it can be natural to breathe fast and shallow to try and get more air into your lungs. This tends to ramp up your feelings of anxiety as it stimulates your body's 'flight or fight'/sympathetic nervous system response. Instead, try some version of slow, deep breathing. There's a few versions like 2:1 breathing (where you exhale twice as long as your inhalation phase, say 3 counts in, 6 counts out) or square breathing where you breath in for 3 counts, hold for 3 counts, and out for 3 counts. Either is fine, but really try and bring your breath down into your belly, rather than in the top of your chest. Take it slow, start with short sessions in a safe place and take breaks as needed.

What protects against COVID-19 infection or transmission?



* See the paper below for full explanations of certainty and why these categories are used. Moderate certainty: we are moderately confident in the effect estimate; the true effect is probably close to the estimate, but it is possibly substantially different. Low certainty: our confidence in the effect estimate is limited; the true effect could be substantially different from the estimate of the effect.

Even when properly used and combined, none of these interventions offers complete protection and other basic protective measures (such as hand hygiene) are essential to reduce transmission

Chu DK, Akl EA, Duda S, et al.
Physical distancing, face masks, and eye protection to prevent person-to-person transmission of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Lancet* 2020. Published online June 1.

THE LANCET