

## COVID-19 Transitioning – Obligatory Conditions and Guidelines for Dance Schools and Dance Studios

### Mandatory Conditions for Dance Schools/Studios

These following obligatory conditions are issued under the Public Health Act Chapter 465 of the Laws of Malta and require strict adherence. Failure to adhere to these conditions will result in enforcement procedures as provided by the Act.

As COVID-19 restrictions are gradually relaxed, employers and workers must work together to adapt and promote safe work practices consistent with advice from public health authorities and to ensure that premises are ready for the social distancing and correct hygiene measures that are critical to the success of the transition. Employers and workers must prevent the transmission of COVID-19 while at work, consistent with updated advice from the public health authorities.

Employers, workers and clients must prepare for the possibility that there could be cases of COVID-19 at dance schools/studios and be ready to respond immediately, appropriately, effectively and efficiently, and consistent with specific recommendations from public health authorities.

### Mandatory Conditions to be observed in Dance Schools/Studios

The Superintendent of Public Health hereby orders that all dance schools/studios shall implement the following measures:

- a) exercise the right of refusal of entry into the dance school/studio of clients (dancers & guardians) if they have a temperature of 37.2°C or higher, are visibly unwell or have respiratory symptoms;
- b) entry to dance studio will be limited only to dancers who have their scheduled lesson.
- c) ensure that maximum capacity of dancers and staff that each dance studio can hold at any one time is 1 person per 6 square metres, and must not exceed 75 persons.
- d) ensure that the maximum number of persons inside the dance school at any one time does not exceed the sum total of the maximum capacity of each dance studio within the dance school
- e) affix visible signage at the entrance of the dance school indicating the maximum capacity that the school can hold at any one time;
- f) affix visible signage at the entrance of each dance studio indicating the maximum capacity that the room can hold at any one time;
- g) indicate with visible markings outside and inside the dance school two (2) metre distances that clients shall respect whilst queuing or waiting to enter;
- h) provide an appropriate 70% alcohol hand-rub at the entrance of the dance school and at the entrance of each dance studio and ensure that all persons sanitise their hands prior to entrance;
- i) acrylic screens or tempered glass barriers must be fitted in reception areas (2 metres high from the floor); (If this not manned then this is not required)
- j) ensure that inside the dance studio every person keeps a minimum of 3 metres from others.
- k) ensure that all equipment, changing rooms, toilets and showers are cleaned and disinfected by staff every hour.

- l) ensure that clients and staff always wear a face mask or face visor whilst inside the dance school/studio when not exercising;
- m) provide appropriate 70% alcohol cleaning wipes, or 70% alcohol spray and disposable paper towels for use by clients for the cleaning of any equipment and mats
- n) there must be no physical contact between dancers at any time, even during dancing
- o) music volume must be kept low, such that the teacher does not need to shout over the music to be heard.
- p) water dispensers are prohibited. All teachers and clients should be encouraged to bring their own water which is clearly labelled
- q) all clients must bring their own personal towel(s) if required
- r) keep a list and contact details (name and contact number) of all people accessing the premises for 28 days (including all staff and clients).

## Understanding how COVID-19 spreads & the effect of and on exercise

Current research suggests that the SARS-CoV-2 virus (the virus that causes COVID-19) is transmitted from person to person:

- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks loudly.
- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 2 metres).

The virus which causes COVID-19 disease can be spread through droplets from a sick person or on contact (by touch). COVID-19 disease often presents with coughing or sneezing which release droplets of infected fluid. Cases may present with other symptoms or none at all. Most of these droplets can fall on nearby surfaces and objects - such as desks, tables, machinery, equipment, floors, walls, clothes or telephones. Other frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, intercoms, lift buttons are other surfaces which are frequently touched by clients and employees can become contaminated. People can catch COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects –and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. Being within two metres of a person with COVID-19, one has a higher risk of catching the disease by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by them. In other words, COVID-19 spreads in a similar way to flu. Most persons infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover. However, some go on to experience more serious illness and may require hospital care. Risk of serious illness rises with age. People with weakened immune systems and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart lung disease are also more vulnerable to serious illness.

The risk of person-to-person transmission is increased the closer one comes to other people, the amount of time spent near them, and the number of people one comes near. Physical distancing measures help mitigate this risk.

The risk of surface transmission is increased when many people contact the same surface, and when those contacts happen in short intervals of time. Effective cleaning and hygiene practices particularly of frequently touched areas help mitigate this risk.

The pattern of breathing during strenuous exercise changes such that there is an increase in both the volumes of air that is breathed in and out, and of the number of breaths taken per unit time. As the rate of breathing increases, the potential of spraying out infected droplets from someone who unknowingly has COVID-19 is higher than under normal circumstances.

Research also suggests that due to strenuous exercise, as one breathes deeper, when exposed to virus particles would be more likely to inhale such particles and direct them to the lower areas of the lung. Thus, measures to minimise the risk of COVID spread must also take this into account.

## Guidelines for the application of COVID-19 mitigation measures in dance schools/studios

### Overview

This document aims to provide guidance to operators, employers and administration at dance schools and studios, as well as users, on mitigating factors and precautions which should be taken in order to restart activity in these facilities.

This guidance has been developed in accordance with current available evidence and is subject to review in case of superseding evidence or changes in mandatory conditions imposed by legislation. This guidance has been developed in accordance with feedback from the stakeholders and provides the general direction for operation of these facilities. It provides the minimum required conditions in order to reopen however the impact will be greater and more sustainable if the operators decide to implement safety measures which are more stringent than those recommended. In this way, the health and safety of both clients and staff is more likely to be maintained.

### Dance School/Studio – General Guidelines

- Limiting the number of persons is important to help ensure social distancing is maintained. Ensure that the maximum capacity of persons inside each dance studio at any one time is one person per 6 square metres, including teachers. To achieve this 6 square metre 'rule': -
  - calculate the area of the dance studio (e.g. length of studio in metres x width of studio in metres = area of studio in square metres),
  - divide the area of the studio by 6, and
  - the answer of that division (ignoring any remainder) is the maximum capacity that the studio can hold at any one time.
  - By way of example, if a studio is 45 square metres in size,  $45 \div 6 = 7.5$ , ignoring 0.5, the studio should allow only seven (7) persons at any time inside the studio, including teacher.
- Ensure that the maximum number of persons inside the dance school at any one time does not exceed the sum total of the maximum capacity of each dance studio within the dance school
- Class groups should remain in the same cohorts, particularly when dancers have multiple classes.
- In children below the age of 5 years it is recommended that groups/classes should not exceed 6 children (excluding teachers), with the same group of children (and teachers where possible) being cohorted together for all lessons
- Reconfiguration of accessible areas, and availability of equipment should be considered, as appropriate.
- All lessons/sessions should follow a clear pre-arranged schedule.

- Lessons/Sessions should be staggered to avoid dancers from different sessions meeting up and also to allow proper cleaning of common areas to take place between each class/session.
- Inform clients of policies restricting people exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19 from entering the dance school and attending for a class. Clients should be advised that they will not be allowed onto the premises at any point if they are exhibiting any symptoms.
- Inform clients that in the interest of public health, records of all sessions and clients are being kept and these would be passed on the public health authorities should the need arise.
- Clear instructions summarising all protocols must be placed prominently in the dance school/studio/reception and communicated through its marketing, online and social media channels.
- Contactless payment should be encouraged.
- Ensure hand hygiene policies include the requirement for workers to wash hands after handling cash and other shared items.
- Ensure that employees who are sick must stay home.
- Avoid unnecessary contact with others at all times including when greeting someone
- If food is required then this should be brought onsite in disposable containers.
- Any cafeteria/restaurant within the dance school should operate in accordance with the Obligatory Conditions and Guidelines issued for cafeterias and restaurants

### Communication with clients

- Clients should be encouraged to inform the dance school/studio if they have been unwell in the 7 days prior to any lessons or if they are in mandatory quarantine.
- Ensure that clients are aware of what is expected of them as part of the hygiene and infection control measures being practiced at the dance school/studio before they attend. These can be communicated to clients over the phone, via email or other appropriate virtual channels.
- Clients should be requested not to arrive more than 5 minutes before their lesson, and lesson/session times should be coordinated to avoid crowding.
- Clients should bring their own water bottles.
- Clients should be advised to limit the personal belongings they bring with them to their lesson(s), and discouraged from using any changing or locker rooms as much as possible, bringing belongings with them into the class.
- Information about lessons, prices should be given electronically, over the phone or through virtual channels.

### Reception area

- Reception areas that are manned by a receptionist must have acrylic screen or tempered glass barriers fitted (2 metres height from the floor)
- At the entrance appropriate signage should be available to inform clients on the maximum number of persons who may be at the dance school at any one time using the square metre rule. This is the safe occupancy limit of the facility and must be respected, only allowing as many people as can safely be in the dance school/studio.
- Appropriate signage should inform customers not to enter the facility if they are exhibiting symptoms.

- Temperature checks on persons is recommended to be carried out at the entry to the dance school, and entry refused to any individual either displaying or complaining of symptoms, not wearing a facemask on entry, or having a temperature of over 37.2C.
- Where possible only dancers should enter the premises; parents/guardians should drop the dancers off outside the premises. In the case of young children, it is recommended that a staff member greets the children so that parents do not enter the premises. Nobody should be allowed to wait inside the waiting room/reception area.
- Queue management - 2m spacing markings on the floor and if necessary, outside the entrance.
- Provide adequate handwashing or hand sanitizer stations for customers and staff to use upon entering the facility and when leaving.
- All staff and clients who are not exercising must wear a mask/visor. Facemasks are to be removed for exercise.
- Appropriate signage should demonstrate that each person must maintain a physical distance from others at all times. Such distance must be of at least 2 metres in the reception area, and of at least 3 metres where physical activity takes place.
- As much as possible doors should be left propped open so people can pass through without touching handles.
- Unnecessary communal items should be removed.
- Consider managing where and how people travel through the premises where possible, including designating doorways for entrance and exit, and using one-way staircases or walkways if available. Signage should indicate these rules.
- All signage should be placed in locations where they are visible, draw attention, and are readable.
- Allocate special lined and closed waste bins for potentially toxic waste – facemasks.
- Ensure that the reception area is configured so that people can maintain physical distancing. Waiting is prohibited.

### In the Dance Studio

- Group classes should only be offered physical distancing measures can be maintained (and respecting the square metre rule)
- It is important that as much as possible, the dancers remain cohorted within the same dance groups
- Consider holding outdoor classes where possible.
- Use of dance studios must abide by Obligatory Conditions and Guidelines issued for the return to Sports in Malta. Maximum capacity must be in-line with both the Sports conditions and these conditions for Dance Schools/Studios, must respect the square metre rule for maximum number of dancers within the premises at a time.
- Dance studios which can hold more than 9 persons according to the square metre rule, may only be used by groups of more than 8 dancers + teacher, if there are floor markings delineating separate areas of 48 square metres, each to be used by a group of up to 8 persons (total capacity must not exceed 75 persons). These groups of persons cannot mix among themselves and should enter and exit the premises in separate groups. Group size must be adjusted to ensure that physical distancing of 3m must still be maintained. Use of changing rooms and showers in such instances are discouraged.

- Hand disinfection is mandatory upon entry into the dance studio, before exercise, and again on leaving the dance studio.
- High-intensity classes may result in greater dispersion of droplets from each participant due to higher intensity breathing in addition to participant movement. Teachers should be positioned well away from participants, and strictly observe the 3m appropriate spacing between participants in these types of activities.
- Dancers should not wear a mask during the lesson/session.
- Teachers should have no direct contact with clients and practice social distancing of 3m at all times.
- In the event that technique/posture demonstration requiring contact is necessary, hand hygiene (and equipment disinfection if necessary) must be practiced using a 70% alcohol-based hand rub or handwashing before and after contact.
- Teachers can wear a mask/visor during the lesson should they wish to do so as long as they are not performing any dance/strenuous activity.
- It is recommended that the volume of music be kept as low as possible to avoid the teacher having to shout over the music.
- Mark a designated area for each dancer to stay inside of where possible.
- Consider removing unused equipment/furniture from studios to create additional space for dancers.
- Dancers should be encouraged to bring their own props for personal use whenever practical. Sharing of personal equipment is not allowed.
- Schedule time between classes to allow for appropriate cleaning and disinfecting.

### Other facilities

- Keeping a distance of 2m from others must be adhered to at all times (3m while exercising)
- Provision of water dispensers is prohibited.
- Use of changing rooms and showers should be discouraged.
- Locker rooms, toilets and showers and frequently touched surfaces must be disinfected every hour/between use by different classes/session groups.
- No air flow dryers or revolving cloth towels are allowed, paper towels recommended.
- Provision of towels to clients is prohibited – all clients should bring their own towels.

### Staff Care - Maintaining good hygiene and general practices

- Employers must implement measures to reduce the risk of person-to-person transmission.
- The use of protective equipment is recommended for the dance school staff. Masks/visors must be used by all staff when not exercising.
- To minimise the risk of having to quarantine all staff in case of a COVID positive person in the dance school/studio, it is recommended that staff are divided into two or more independent teams, minimising contact between the teams as much as possible. In this way, should one of the teams have to be quarantined, the other team(s) would be able to continue. In the case of such an eventuality, complete disinfection of the dance school must be done.
- Ensure that physical distancing measures are maintained within staff rooms and other staff areas

- In addition to the means for regular hand disinfection, it is necessary to provide the staff with protective hand creams - frequent disinfection may dry the skin, the use of creams prevents skin problems.

### Staff should

- Avoid touching their eyes nose and mouth.
- Wash hands frequently especially:
  - Before, during (if required), and after each treatment/service to a client
  - Before putting on and after removing face masks, visors, gloves and aprons
  - Before and after cleaning tools, equipment and the environment in the studio
  - Before and after eating
  - Before and after coffee breaks
  - Before and after cigarette breaks
  - After using the rest room
  - Upon arriving at work and at home

**Washing hands with soap should be given priority over using alcohol hand rub. The application of alcohol hand rub should not be done in place of hand washing but rather as a complementary step AFTER handwashing or if hand washing is not convenient.**

**Alcohol hand rub should contain a minimum of 70% alcohol.**

- Use disposable hand towels to dry hands and to open and turn off taps.
- Not use handshakes/hugs when greeting clients and colleagues.
- Monitor their personal health and condition for any symptoms, however mild.
- Wear uniforms at work which should be changed daily and washed after use. Uniforms/clothing worn inside the dance studios should not be worn at home.
- Keep hair tied back to avoid unnecessary touching of hair and face.
- Practice good respiratory etiquette requiring everyone at the premises to, at all times:
  - cover their coughs and sneezes with a clean tissue or use their elbow (and no spitting)
  - avoid touching their face, eyes, nose and mouth
  - dispose of used tissues and cigarette butts hygienically, e.g. in closed bins
  - clean and disinfect shared equipment and machinery after use
  - wash body, hair (including facial hair) and clothes thoroughly every day
  - have no intentional physical contact such as shaking hands and patting backs
- Staff who develop a mild cough, fever (i.e. a temperature of 37.2<sup>0</sup>C or higher), shortness of breath, headaches, tiredness, loss of taste, loss of smell or diarrhoea, should call the public health helpline on 111 giving details of their symptoms, and get an appointment for swabbing.

### Use of Personal Protective Equipment by staff

- Staff should wear a surgical or cotton mask or visor when not exercising.
- The face mask should completely cover the face from the bridge of the nose down to the chin. Clean hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitiser before putting on and taking off the face mask. When taking off the face mask,



remove it from behind, avoiding touching the front side. Dispose of the face mask safely by placing it in a plastic bag and put it in the trash if it is disposable. Wash your hands or apply 70% alcohol hand-rub immediately after removing the face mask. Washable, reusable face masks should be washed as soon as possible after each use, using common detergent at 60 °C.

- Surgical masks are not intended to be used more than once. If your mask is damaged or soiled, or if breathing through the mask becomes difficult, you should remove the face mask, discard it safely, and replace it with a new one.
- Visors should ideally be the reusable type and are disinfected appropriately in between clients.



### Cleaning and disinfecting measures

A combination of cleaning and disinfection will be most effective in removing the virus responsible for causing COVID-19. There shall be ongoing cleaning and disinfection operations of all the common areas. Premises must be cleaned at least daily. Cleaning with detergent and water is sufficient. Once clean, surfaces can be disinfected. When and how often the premises should be disinfected will depend on the likelihood of contamination. Alternatively, cleaners may be able to do a 2-in-1 clean



and disinfection by using a combined detergent and disinfectant. Rigorous cleaning procedures must be adopted.

### **How to clean and disinfect**

Cleaning means to physically remove germs (bacteria and viruses), dirt and grime from surfaces using a detergent and water solution. A detergent is designed to break up oil and grease with the use of water. Anything labelled as a detergent will work. Cleaning should start with the dirtiest surface first, progressively moving towards the cleanest surface. When surfaces are cleaned, they should be left as dry as possible to reduce the risk of slips and falls, as well as spreading of viruses and bacteria through droplets.

Disinfecting means using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. It is important to clean before disinfecting because dirt and grime can reduce the ability of disinfectants to kill germs. Disinfectants containing  $\geq 70\%$  alcohol, ammonium compounds, chlorine bleach or oxygen bleach are suitable for use on hard surfaces (surfaces where liquids pool, and do not soak in). The packaging or manufacturer's instructions will outline the correct way to use disinfectant. Disinfectants require time to be effective at killing viruses. If no time is specified, the disinfectant should be left for ten minutes before removing.

### **Areas to be cleaned and disinfected**

Any surfaces that are frequently touched should be prioritised for cleaning, e.g. door handles, seating, counters, phones, POS machines, vending machines, acrylic screens (if installed), bathroom and other sanitary facilities, including bathroom fixtures like taps and flushing handles, changing rooms, shower rooms and locker rooms. Such cleaning must be done every hour or between use by different classes/session groups. Surfaces that are visibly dirty, or have a spill, should be cleaned as soon as they are identified, regardless of when they were last cleaned. The entire premises should be cleaned and disinfected at least every day. If the premises have many patrons entering each day, more frequent disinfection of areas used by patrons is recommended.

Areas within the dance studio which are likely to be touched by successive groups of dancers during each lesson such as dance barres should be disinfected between each group of dancers. Thus time should be scheduled between classes to allow for appropriate cleaning and disinfecting.

Establishments should have protocols in place for actions to be taken in case a client or member or staff develops coronavirus symptoms while on the premises, including appropriate cleaning and disinfection.

### **What should cleaners wear?**

In most circumstances, it will not be necessary for cleaners to wear protective clothing to clean the premises. However, workers should use personal protective equipment (PPE) that is necessary for the products they are using. Gloves and a disposable apron are the minimum requirements. Medical masks should be used if cleaning an area impacted by a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case. Clothes that can be washed afterwards are suitable. In this case it is important that such clothes are changed once the cleaning procedures are ready.

## Aeration

- Studios must be well ventilated, circulating fresh air. HVAC systems should have adequate air turnover rates and appropriate filters. It is necessary to use air conditioning with separate air supply and exhaust.
- If air conditioning is not possible, it is recommended to use air disinfection equipment and combine it with regular ventilation.
- The use of fans only is prohibited, as these work as air mixing – circulating the same air. High-powered fans may result in greater dispersion of droplets and should not be used if they produce a horizontal flow of air. Thus fan use should be limited to those producing vertical air flow, and only if windows are also open for ventilation. Consider further reducing class, group or total occupancy limits to maintain room temperature at manageable levels without the use of high-powered fans.

How to stay informed: [www.covid19health.gov.mt](http://www.covid19health.gov.mt)