

Group singing and reducing the risk of COVID-19 transmission

This fact sheet provides advice for people participating in group singing activities to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Respiratory droplets and vocalisation (singing)

- > Respiratory droplets and aerosols are particles produced in exhaled breath (when a person breathes out). These particles are too small to see without a microscope. Aerosols can stay suspended in the air for longer than droplets and may travel further down the respiratory tract (into the mouth, throat and lungs) than droplets when inhaled (breathed in).
- > Sneezing, coughing and singing can produce more respiratory particles and can spread them further than speaking.
- > More research is needed to understand how factors such as type of phonation (for example, breathy or whispered), voice type, and level of loudness may affect how these respiratory particles behave.

COVID-19 transmission

- > COVID-19 is spread via droplets during close contact when another person breathes in droplets containing the virus. It can also spread via direct contact with an infected person's respiratory secretions or objects contaminated by these secretions.
- > Ventilation and air movement affect the behaviour of respiratory particles (eg increased air movement allows respiratory particles to disperse). The risk of disease transmission in an outdoors setting is usually lower compared to an indoor setting, because there is usually more fresh air and air movement to disperse the respiratory particles outdoors.

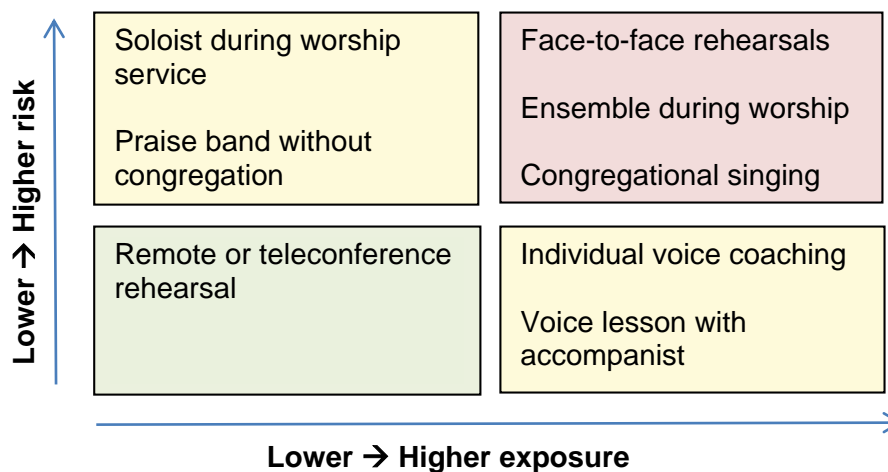
Recommendations for reducing the risk of transmission when singing

- > Any person who is unwell or has symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home and should get tested for COVID-19. Symptoms of COVID-19 may include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath or loss of taste and smell.
- > As singing increases the distance that droplets can travel, spacing people at least 2 metres apart is advised if this is possible. Studies have shown a range of distances that droplets can travel under different conditions, so spacing as much as possible is recommended.
- > Decreasing the amount of people congregating and singing together reduces the risk. Consider designating one person, or a very small group of people who can maintain physical distancing, to sing at gatherings, rather than singing together as a congregation.
- > Decreasing the amount of time any group of individuals spend together singing decreases period of exposure.
- > Rehearse or perform outdoors when possible. Ensure good ventilation if rehearsing or performing indoors.
- > Avoid sharing objects such as hymn books, music stands, and instruments. Thoroughly clean any frequently touched objects and surfaces.

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COVID-19 and singing

- > There is currently limited scientific research focusing specifically on singing and COVID-19 transmission.
- > There have been reports from around the world of clusters of COVID-19 infection associated with singing. These include religious practices and services, church choirs, concerts, music festivals, and karaoke parties.
- > It is possible that transmission in these groups occurred from close contact, and/or contact with shared surfaces or objects, rather than via droplets/aerosols during singing, but it is difficult to know for certain without further research.
- > Based on what is currently known about transmission, risk increases by:
 - Congregating for longer periods of time (increasing the period of exposure)
 - Increasing number of infected individuals, who each carry a viral load to which others may be exposed, in a closed space
 - Limited ability to clear the air in the space.



(Adapted from Naunheim et al, 2020)

For more information

SA COVID-19 Information Line 1800 253 787
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID2019
Health Regulation and Protection
Department for Health and Wellbeing
SA Health, Government of South Australia
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID2019

