

Message from the Encore Creativity for Older Adults COVID Task Force on  
Spring 2024 Activities

December 13, 2023

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We're in the midst of the fall concert season. How does the time go so quickly? As we think ahead to the spring 2024 session, we want to offer some updates on staying healthy. With the fall season and much more indoor activity also comes increasing potential exposure to influenza, COVID, and Respiratory syncytial (sin-SISH-uhl) virus, or RSV. As older adults, often with chronic conditions, we are at high risk for complications, hospitalizations and death if we are infected.

As you know, masks will no longer be mandated for rehearsals and performances. However, we encourage any singer who feels more comfortable with wearing a mask to continue masking. It is important that singers be able to show up to rehearsals and join in the way that they feel most comfortable. We also encourage those who wish to wear respiratory protection to use KN95 and N95 respirators/masks. To enhance the effectiveness of the protection, the most critical thing is to maintain a tight seal on your face. There is some evidence that double masking with a cloth mask provides protection, particularly if you can maintain a tight fit to your face while singing. If you don't have easy access to the KN95/N95 masks, a surgical mask can provide some protection, but it is still not as effective. We appreciate that you have been and will continue to respect the wishes of those who wish to remain masked during rehearsals and concerts.

Since 2021, Encore has required the original two dose vaccine and previous boosters in 2021/2022. We thank our singers for getting all the past COVID vaccines. If you are a new singer but you don't have proof of the previous vaccines, we will accept proof of the fall 2023 monovalent booster vaccine. We know that immunity wanes. For continuing singers, we do not require but strongly encourage you to stay up to date with the fall 2023 monovalent booster vaccine. This vaccine is appropriate for the current variants, and offers significant protection from severe illness, hospitalization and death. It is readily available in local pharmacies. Please

look to the CDC webpage for good information (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/stay-up-to-date.html>). We also encourage you to get the influenza vaccine for older adults ([https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/qa\\_fluzone.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/qa_fluzone.htm)), and the RSV vaccine (<https://www.cdc.gov/rsv/high-risk/older-adults.html>).

Finally, we urge the following additional actions to protect all of us:

- Research has demonstrated that transmission can occur within a short time period. If you have a known close exposure to someone who subsequently tests positive, please test yourself on day 1, 3 and 5. The day you are exposed is day 0. You should wear a mask (N95) for 10 days after the exposure even if you test negative. There is sometimes a delay between symptom onset and positive tests.
- If you have symptoms of COVID-19, please test yourself with a rapid test. If the test is negative and yet you have symptoms, you should contact your doctor for a PCR test. Rapid tests may give you a false negative if the viral load is not high enough. Even if your PCR is negative, you should wear a mask while experiencing symptoms.
- If you are positive, please stay home for 10 days. You will be infectious during this time. If you are still experiencing symptoms after 10 days or continue to have a fever, please follow up with your doctor and continue to wear a mask (N95) when around others.
- While these points are focused on COVID, many symptoms are similar for flu, COVID and RSV. While you may not have COVID, we appreciate the same diligence in staying home if you have symptoms.

We wish you a happy and healthy holiday season. We look forward to the new session in January, 2024. With these precautions, we believe that we can continue to reduce our risk. Sing on!