

April 25, 2024

From: Encore Creativity COVID Task Force (Dr. Sandra Quinn, Dr. Jacob Bueno de Mesquita, Dr. Robin Mockenhaupt, Ms. Karen Doyle, MSN, LNHA, Dr. Arthur Karpas, Dr. Anthony Tambasco)

Spring is here, and Encore is busy with concerts. Yet we are thinking ahead to the summer and fall 2024 programs and we want to offer some updates on staying healthy. With the fall season will come much more indoor activity, which increases 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. We believe we can do much to keep ourselves, our conductors, and all our families healthy.

Encore has previously required masks and the initial series of COVID-19 vaccines, plus additional boosters. For the fall 2024 semester of in-person Encore Creativity programs, we will no longer be mandating COVID-19 vaccinations or masking. However, we encourage singers to arrive at rehearsals in ways that will make them feel most comfortable and safe. Here are some ways to reduce our risk, individually and in a group setting.

- **VOLUNTARY MASKS:** Masks will continue to be voluntary 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. 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.
- **SUGGESTED VACCINES:** Our requirements for the 2021-2022 vaccines are now outdated. We know that immunity wanes, and we strongly encourage you to stay up to date with the COVID monovalent booster vaccine. People aged 65 years and older who received 1 dose of any updated 2023-2024 COVID-19 vaccine should receive 1 additional dose of an updated COVID-19 vaccine at least 4 months after the previous updated dose. [People who are moderately or severely immunocompromised](#) may get additional doses of updated COVID-19 vaccines. 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 strongly encourage staying current with other important vaccinations including influenza, RSV and pneumococcal vaccines. Fall is the time 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>).

· EXPOSURE AND/OR HAVING SYMPTOMS: Finally, we urge the following additional actions to protect all of us:

- a. If you have a known close exposure to someone who subsequently tests positive, please test yourself on day 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. See this resource:  
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/testing.html#when-to-get-tested>
- b. 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.
- c. If you are positive, please stay home. If you are negative but still have symptoms, please stay home until you are no longer experiencing symptoms. 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.

Encore Creativity's mission is to create meaningful arts experiences supporting lifelong learning, wellness, and fun for all older adults. We believe that we can do much to protect ourselves and each other so that we can keep singing!