



**ibf** INTERNATIONAL  
BREATHWORK  
FOUNDATION

## **COVID-19 Guidelines for Breathworkers**

### **July 2021 Update**

**Dear Friends and Members,**

We hope this finds you well after what we know has been a challenging year for the world and our community.

The IBF Executive Team (ET), Science & Research Advisory Group (SciRAG) and Integrity Committee (IC) issued guidelines in April and June of 2020 which we hope have supported you to work and breathe safely during the Covid-19 pandemic. Earlier this year we launched a survey to help us understand your varied experiences of Covid-19 worldwide and how this has affected your breathwork practice and preferences.

The Covid-19 situation has evolved globally and we recognize that any guidance that we offer still needs to be interpreted based on the current Covid-19 situation in your country or region.

Covid-19 is spread by respiratory droplets and there is increasing evidence showing that it is also spread through aerosols. These minuscule particles can float in the air for many hours. This means that being in the same room with an infected person puts us at risk of transmission, and even after the infected person has left you could become infected. The practice of conscious connected breathwork, regardless of whether breathing through the nose or mouth, poses a significant risk of spreading the virus, especially if loud sounds are being made with an open mouth. The louder we speak; the further droplets are projected into the space around us. When we shout or sing, droplets can travel as far as 6 to 8 meters away from us.

We recognize that in some areas the risk of infection is falling, and you may be considering returning to in-person sessions or have perhaps already done so.

Should you be in doubt on how to move forward with your in-person and/or group work, please consider these recommendations to work in the safest way for yourself and your clients. These recommendations are based on international guidelines, healthcare and well-being industry standards and scientific literature.

It is currently expected that Covid-19 in all its variations will become part of daily life. These measures are therefore recommended for now and many of them will remain relevant and important in the long term in relation to conscious breathwork when a client or facilitator has symptoms of acute illness.

- 1. We strongly recommend that you follow the government recommendations regarding the prevention and containment of Covid-19 in your own country/region. Conscious breathwork would generally fall within the group of contact workers if using regulatory breath practices, and in the group of sports/singing when working with conscious connected breathwork.**

2. **Returning to one-to-one in person sessions following a risk assessment for practitioner and client may be possible if it is within regulations of local government.**
3. **Planning for residential retreats and events may be possible by creating a “bubble”. This involves completing a risk assessment for everyone attending, ensuring the appropriate hygienic measures as recommended by your local government, having clients refrain from coming when experiencing Covid-19-like symptoms and confirming a negative Covid-19 test no more than 72 hours before the event.**
4. **Ad hoc, one-off groups remain a high-risk practice and are not recommended until your government removes all relevant epidemic/pandemic alerts in your region. Even then – it is important to ensure that nobody attends your group who has been travelling outside your region in the past 14 days except when regulations about these have been dropped by your government.**
5. **Check your liability insurance policy, as working with clients outside your government restrictions may leave you liable for injury of your clients following a session with you.**
6. **We encourage our community to be leaders of light in this time; to maintain our daily breathing practice, connect to the collective consciousness and be mindful and responsible in how we share our work.**

#### **IBF Disclaimer:**

1. IBF is a networking organization, not a regulatory body. The guidance that we share with you is the work of the Science and Research Advisory Group and is based upon the WHO and government guidance in Europe and the US. It is offered to support you.
2. We are doing our best to provide safe and useful information to assist you to decide how to safely return to in-person sessions in your own country.
3. We represent over 400 members from over 40 countries and a wide range of breathwork practices. It is impossible for us to provide universal guidance as the pandemic continues to evolve at different rates around the world.
4. We strongly recommend that you follow the government recommendations regarding the prevention and containment of Covid-19 in your own country.
5. We trust that all breathwork practitioners are safely guided in taking the right decisions concerning their ongoing work with clients in the coming months.

## **In Love and Light**

We recognize that there may be circumstances where a breathwork practitioner decides that is appropriate and necessary to work in-person with a client even if local regulations discourage this. This decision, as always, remains on the discretion of the breathwork practitioner.

We wish you lots of joy and fulfillment in the gradual opening of your practice and programs. We are so grateful that you are doing this incredibly important work. The world needs to breathe, now more than ever. Thank you for holding that space and being in service to the bigger picture.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions.

**IBF - The International Breathwork Foundation**

## COVID-19

The three 'classic' Covid-19 symptoms are persistent cough, fever and loss or change in sense of smell. Other common symptoms include headache, fatigue, sore throat, loss of appetite, breathlessness, shortness of breath, confusion and rash.

Please be aware that symptoms may be milder or absent in people who have antibodies or have been vaccinated and there will be NO symptoms in 20% of people who are infected.

- We recommend screening clients for symptoms prior to in-person sessions and emphasize that it is every client and breathworker's responsibility not to attend if they have any symptoms. Please check your government guidance on suggestions for questions to ask.
- We recommend that in-person sessions and events should take place with clients from within your country and region, according to your government rules. We recommend you work in bubbles as much as possible when hosting events, thereby restricting travel of staff and participants after having started your event.

### COVID-19 Infection Rates

- 20% of people have NO SYMPTOMS while infected with Covid-19 (Asymptomatic Carriers).
- Most people (58.2%) who get Covid-19 are back to normal in 11 days or less.
- 1/7 (14.5%) have symptoms lasting at least 4 weeks.
- 1/20 (5.1%) have symptoms lasting at least 8 weeks.
- 1/45 (2.2%) have symptoms lasting longer than 12 weeks (long Covid / post-Covid syndrome).

Although it is difficult to predict who is most at risk of severe Covid-19 illness, hospitalization or long Covid syndrome, we recommend you calculate your Covid Age (*See Covid Age section below*). This can give an indication of your personal risk.

Every individual must make their own decision about when they return to in-person sessions. The main factors in this decision will be:

- Local government guidance on returning to group singing or group exercise.
- Your personal risk of becoming severely unwell if infected with Covid-19 (your Covid Age).
- Whether or not you have chosen to be vaccinated, have tested positive for Covid-19 antibodies (in the last 4-6 months) or whether you have recovered from Covid-19.

**The IBF and SciRAG cannot offer any advice or recommendations about Covid-19 vaccination. This is an individual and deeply personal choice.**

## COVID-19 Risk Assessment

Age alone is not meaningful when assessing your risk in relation to Covid-19 infection. Your personal risk calculation takes into account your age, gender, ethnicity, weight, height and medical history.

### COVID AGE

- Summarises your personal risk factors using an anonymous online calculator.
- Tells you your personal risk of becoming seriously unwell with Covid-19.
- Allows you to communicate confidentially about your personal level of vulnerability.

70% of those who answered the 2021 IBF survey (including 33% of the IBF members) are in a moderate or higher risk category of Covid Age. Please refer to the separate document (Summary of Covid-19 Survey) which was sent to you on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2021.

- Clients and breathworkers in the moderate or high-risk category are more likely to become severely unwell if they are infected with Covid-19.
- Knowing your Covid Age as a client or practitioner will help you to make decisions about when it is right for you to return to in-person one-to-one or group breathwork and how to implement protective measures when you do.
- We recommend that both practitioner and client calculate their Covid Age and discuss any concerns and safety measures before booking an in-person session.
- We recommend using this Covid Age calculator: <https://alama.org.uk/covid-19-medical-risk-assessment/>

Below is a summary table of recommendations about in-person breathwork based on Covid Age.

Please note that your personal risk will also depend on current infection rates in your region, your vaccination status and the Covid-19 test status of people attending your session. Your nutritional supplementation and/or treatments by your GP may also be important.

COVID AGE	VULNERABILITY	ADVICE/RECOMMENDATIONS
>85	Very High	Stay at home, Shielding (Self-isolation). In Person Breathwork not advised.
70-84	High	High level caution when leaving home. In Person Breathwork not advised.
50-69	Moderate	In Person one-to-one breathwork possible with appropriate safety measures. In Person Group breathwork not advised.
<50	Low	General government safety measures apply. In Person one-to-one and group breathwork possible with appropriate safety measures.

## IBF GUIDANCE FOR IN-PERSON SESSIONS AND EVENTS

When considering in-person sessions and events it is important to note the following:

- Nobody can know for certain whether or not they are carrying the virus at any time.
- An asymptomatic person could spread the virus for up to 5 days before developing symptoms.
- The absence of symptoms does not confirm the absence of Covid-19 when breathing together.
- The presence of antibodies to Covid-19 may indicate that an individual has had a Covid-19 infection in the past 4-6 months. Levels of antibodies diminish over time, generally to below measurement levels after 6 months. A negative antibody test after 6 months does not mean you have not had an infection or would not be protected. Science has shown that people build up T-cell memory for this disease, creating protection over long periods of time (10-20 years)<sup>1</sup>.
- The reinfection rate is 0.7-1% so there is a small chance that a person could have the virus more than once.
- The presence of antibodies to Covid-19 does not prevent an individual from carrying Covid-19 in their airways or on their body and transmitting it to other people.
- Vaccination against Covid-19 indicates that an individual has protection against severe disease but does not prevent that individual from carrying Covid-19 in their airways or on their body and transmitting it to other people.

Taking all these factors and the latest available evidence into consideration, we offer the following guidelines and recommendations for in-person breathwork sessions and events.

### TESTING

- We recommend you follow your government policy regarding PCR testing by nasal or throat swab or rapid antigen tests within the number of hours as specified by your government for travelers coming into the country before attending a breathwork group event.
  - This ensures that participants and staff can safely enter a breathing “bubble”.
  - This is a minimum requirement for group breathwork events.
  - It is advisable to do the same for one-to-one sessions.
- Antibody testing cannot be used to replace pre-event PCR testing. Having antibodies means that you are at low risk of severe infection, but you can still spread the virus.
- Proof of vaccination cannot be used to replace pre-event PCR testing. Having the vaccination means that you are at low risk of severe infection, but you can still spread the virus.

### Laboratory PCR Testing

- Laboratory RT-PCR (Reverse Transcriptase – Polymerase Chain Reaction) testing by nasal and throat swab may take 24 hours to return a result and can be costly.
- **This is the Gold-Standard test – the best and most reliable option for pre-event testing.**
- Systematic review estimates RT-PCR sensitivity at 70-89% and specificity at 95%.
  - This means that 95% of those who do not have the virus will have a negative result.
  - The test only picks up 70-89% of those who do have the virus.
  - Up to 30% of those testing negative, may have Covid-19 or go on to develop symptoms after the test was taken. (BMJ May 2020, SIGN Dec 2020)

## Rapid Antigen Tests

These tests identify proteins on the virus surface. They come in plastic cassettes similar to pregnancy tests.

- Rapid Antigen Tests correctly identify positive infection in 72-97% of people with symptoms, depending on the test used <sup>2,3</sup>.
- They correctly identify positive infection in 58-95% of people without symptoms.
- They are most accurate when used in the first week after symptoms develop.
- Some tests are accepted by governments as a pre-requisite to travel into the country. We recommend you check which tests are accepted by your local government and use those if you wish to create a bubble with your participants when giving an in-person breath event.
- These rapid antigen tests can replace laboratory-based PCR testing in symptomatic patients to aid decision making.
- Due to the variable sensitivity of these tests, **people who test negative may still be infected.**
- It is recommended to have a PCR test done to verify a positive antigen test.

## Rapid Point-of-care Molecular Tests

These tests detect the virus's genetic material in a similar way to laboratory methods.

- These tests correctly identify 95.1% of positive infections in people with symptoms.
- These tests correctly rule out infection in 99% of tests in people with symptoms.
- The Cochrane review concluded that there is insufficient evidence for point-of-care molecular testing in asymptomatic people to date.

Rapid antigen and molecular tests are faster, cheaper and more widely available than laboratory PCR testing, but they vary in reliability.

## VACCINATION

**The IBF and SciRAG cannot offer any advice or recommendations about COVID-19 vaccination. This is an individual and deeply personal choice.**

Points to consider when working in-person as a breathwork practitioner:

- If you have been vaccinated it is likely that your Covid Age or risk level will go down.
- In theory, the benefit of vaccination is that you are at less risk of developing severe Covid-19.
- If you have been vaccinated, your ability to spread the virus remains unchanged. This means you will still need to use protective measures when working with in-person clients.
- If you have tested positive for antibodies, it means that you are protected from developing severe illness. Your ability to spread the virus remains unchanged. This means you will still need to use protective measures when working with in-person clients.

## HAND HYGEINE

Handwashing or disinfection is an easy and effective measure to bring down the risk of transferring Covid-19. We advise handwashing or disinfection for all in-person sessions to ensure individual and group safety in accordance with your government rules.

## MASK WEARING

Many questions arise about the necessity of mask wearing during the session.

- Non-medical masks are not sufficient to filter out viruses. The analogy of trying to catch a mosquito with chicken wire is about accurate. Non-medical masks are not going to prevent you or your client from contracting Covid-19.
- Only FFP2 (or higher) masks are sufficient to keep our virus particles from being breathed in air. In many countries it is illegal to purchase these types of masks if one is not a health care worker in regular medicine. If it is not illegal to purchase these, we recommend you use these masks if you wish to use a mask when supporting your client within the legal social distance.
- In addition, when breathing a full, diaphragmatic breath, any mask will be saturated within 20 minutes. Having your client wear a mask is therefore redundant.

Reasons why you would consider wearing a mask as a breathworker are:

- To follow your government rules.
- If you have a moderate to high Covid Age and risk and wish to protect yourself.
- To protect your next client by ensuring that you are not getting droplets with virus particles in your airways during your current session.
- To prevent spreading of droplets potentially containing viruses. Droplets are known to contain a far higher viral load than aerosols.

In addition:

- When breathing, speaking loudly or making sounds, droplets may travel as far as 6-8 meters.
- Wearing a mask as a breathworker is useful to prevent larger droplets from falling onto your client during a session while you are close to them.
- Another way to keep your practice space clean for all clients is to have your clients drape a towel over their face when making loud sounds during the session. This will prevent your entire space being covered with droplets.
- If you use a towel, make sure you use a clean towel for each client, do not touch the towel yourself and wash it as soon as possible at 60°Celsius/140° Fahrenheit or wash it at 40°Celsius/ 104° Fahrenheit and put it in the dryer.
- Individuals may choose not to wear a mask if they are in a low-risk Covid Age group and have a negative Covid-19 test not older than 72 hours (both clients and breathworkers).

## CLEANING YOUR EQUIPMENT

The Covid-19 virus can survive for up to 72 hours outside the human body in ideal laboratory conditions. In normal real-life conditions, survival of the virus is seen to decrease to considerably less than that (to a few hours). The risk of contracting Covid-19 through surfaces is therefore thought to be limited. However, it is prudent to take precautionary measures to reduce the risk of transfer.

- Make sure you clean surface areas and especially all areas where you or your client may have dropped body liquids (like tissues, a towel with saliva, etc.).
- Wash all fabrics (clothing, sheets, and towels) which have been in contact with bodily fluids. Washing should be done at minimum 60° Celsius (See above).
- A great way to save yourself some work is to have your clients bring their own equipment with them. Depending on the numbers of Covid-19 in your country, you may need to have each participant wrap their equipment in plastic bags between sessions if giving group sessions.
  - This is under the premise that your local government allows group sessions of this nature.
  - Alternatively, you can allocate personal equipment to each client throughout a residential event. Even without Covid-19, this is advisable.

## AIR EXCHANGE

- It is safest to work outside.
- When working inside we recommend airing the room you have been working in for at least 20 minutes between clients or groups.
- You will need to have all windows and doors open and create a steady airflow from one side of the room to the other to air the room effectively.

## AIR PURIFICATION

- Negative ionization apparatus is shown to diminish the viral load of all air particles, which includes floating virus particles.
- We recommend that you consider investing in a negative ionization device for your practice space. There are many different types of devices:
  - Make sure that the device is powerful enough to treat the size of your space (this is usually mentioned with each apparatus).
  - Ozone production happens with the older models. It is important to purchase a device which emits as little ozone as possible (The more recent devices are usually better).
  - Make sure you air the room for at least 20 minutes between clients or groups to let any excess Ozone leave the space.

## STRENGTHEN YOUR IMMUNITY

- Eating a healthy diet with diverse fruit and vegetable intake is important for a healthy immune system. An easy way to remember what to eat, is to make sure you eat all colors of the rainbow in fruits and vegetables each day.
- Sleep is a vital ingredient of good health. Make sure you and your client get enough sleep and of a sufficient quality. There are breathing exercises (and breathing apps to assist with counting) which can help to calm down before going to bed, such as:
  - Heart Coherent Breathing (4 counts in, 6 counts out),
  - Coherent Breathing (5 counts in, 5 counts out)
  - The 4-7-8 breath (4 counts in, hold for 7 counts, 6 counts out).
- Studies have shown that sufficient levels of nutrients such as vitamin D, selenium and zinc supported with agents like quercetin or ivermectin greatly reduce the incidence, the severity and mortality of Covid-19 infections. <sup>4,5,6</sup> Note: When you are using these supplements, your ability to spread the virus is likely to remain unchanged.
- In countries with seasonal weather changes, Covid-19 infections diminish in the warm summer season and increase in the cold winter seasons <sup>7,8</sup>. It is therefore advisable to hold your group events in the summer season. Part of the decrease in infections in summer is thought to be due to people going outside more, windows being open and ventilation happening naturally this way.

# IBF GUIDANCE FOR ONLINE BREATHWORK SESSIONS

As COVID-19 conditions may vary in time and over the Globe, you may find yourself in a situation where only online sessions are possible. For your guidance, please find our following recommendations for online breathing sessions.

## Guidelines for clients:

- Ensure that the breathwork practitioner offering the online session is fully trained.
- Wear comfortable clothes and loosen belt and bra.
- Prepare your space: Make sure it is warm enough. Have a pillow and blanket, a glass of water and clean tissues handy.
- Position your camera in a way that you are visible so that you can be guided in safe way.
- Make sure you will not be disturbed: Inform others in the house that you are doing a session, close the door, switch off your phone/doorbell.
- Before the session: Go the toilet. Avoid consuming any alcohol or intoxicating substances. Do not eat a large meal.
- If possible, have another person around in the house in case you need help.

## Guidelines for practitioners:

1. Make sure you are fully trained and experienced enough as a breathwork practitioner before offering online sessions.
2. Ensure that you are operating within the scope of training of any other profession in which you may be licensed.
3. Check that you are insured appropriately to deliver your practice online.
4. Ensure that you take a full history from all clients before beginning the session.
5. Identify all clients who are new to Breathwork.

## Working with NEW clients:

- Limit the time of breathing to 20-30 minutes.  
Example of an online session: 15 min explaining, 20 min breathing, 15 min sharing.
- Focus on awareness, mindfulness, regulation, and relaxation practices.
- You may want to offer nose breathing as a gentler approach unless the client is comfortable and experienced with the mouth breathing process and you are experienced enough to facilitate it.
- We do not recommend teaching new clients to do conscious connected breathwork that may induce altered states of consciousness online.

## Advice for ALL clients:

- We discourage process-oriented breathing online, unless both the client and practitioner are experienced in the practice and in working together.
- Only those practitioners who are experienced at working with groups both in person and online should consider offering group sessions online at this time.
- Only those clients who are sufficiently experienced with the practice that is being offered should be invited to participate in group sessions online.
- It is safest to invite clients to breathe lying down or sitting on the floor or on their bed.
- Clearly explain what could happen in the session including but not limited to: tingling, dizziness, trembling or shaking, other physical sensations and emotional experiences.
- Remind the client: "You can always go back to your own breathing at any time."
- Make sure that the client is aware of the contraindications to your type of breathwork and breathwork in general.
- Make it clear that people are self-responsible (Use a disclaimer).

## IBF GUIDANCE FOR DISCLAIMERS

We recommend that every client does the following in writing (or by email) before breathing with a breathwork practitioner for the first time.

- Confirms that they have disclosed any existing medical conditions before the session.
- Confirms that they have read and agreed to your disclaimer.
- Provide their name and contact details (phone number & address).
- Provide contact details for their next of kin (phone number) in case of emergency.
- Confirms that they have read and understood your COVID-19 statement.
- Confirms that they understand and agree to all measures that you have put in place to meet the recommendations of your local authority, insurance and professional association.
- Confirms and signs a COVID-19 declaration.

### COVID-19 Statement:

Please consider the following items when constructing a statement for your clients in addition to any existing requirements set out by your government and local authorities.

You, your staff and your client should:

- Understand that Conscious Breathwork is considered a high-risk activity for spreading virus particles as both aerosols and droplets.
- Consider their own health, vaccination status and personal risk.
- Be informed and satisfied with the distancing and hygiene measures in place before booking a session or event.
- Be aware of current travel rules for your region and apply these accordingly.

### COVID-19 Declaration:

Before any in-person session you, your staff and your client should confirm the following:

- I (or anyone in my household) do not currently have any symptoms of COVID-19 or any other viral infection.
- I (or anyone in my household) have not had symptoms of COVID-19 in the last 10-14 days (or equivalent time in your region).
- I (or anyone in my household) have not been in contact with a COVID-19 positive person in the last 10-14 days (or equivalent time in your region).
- I understand that it is my responsibility to inform my Facilitator/Client immediately if I develop symptoms in the next 7-10 days (or the local equivalent number of days following the session) to ensure that they can arrange testing and/or isolation.

## REFERENCES

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