

Guidelines for Controlling the Spread of Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Infections in Museums

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Japanese Association of Museums

1. Introduction

As infections of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) continue to spread, many museums are endeavoring to control infections while also providing a broad range of information with the aim of fulfilling their role of enriching people's lives even under such circumstances. The Japanese Association of Museums wishes to express its gratitude for their efforts.

Museums and art galleries were included among the facilities specified for opening, premised on their implementation of infection control measures, within the government's policies for responses associated with the emergency declaration's recent extension. We view this as evidence of museums' importance as social infrastructure and a good sign toward reopening.

Nonetheless, the situation remains severe and highly unpredictable. Thus, implementing all available means to control infections is essential as a prerequisite for each facility's reopening.

The Guidelines presented here arrange basic actions that museums throughout Japan should implement to control the spread of COVID-19 infection with an eye to reopening their facilities based on the government's policies.

As many types of museum exist, we anticipate that a more detailed version of these Guidelines may become necessary depending on the museum type. Moreover, we understand that the Guidelines may contain actions that individual facilities will find difficult to immediately accommodate or introduce depending on their circumstances. Implementing all of the actions presented is not mandatory for reopening. However, we hope that museums will, after taking basic steps to implement infection control, refer to them in their planning as recommended actions for enhancing the effects of those steps.

It is our hope that each museum will fully understand the necessity of implementing infection control measures to ensure the safety of its visitors and staff as it reopens its facilities, and effectively apply these Guidelines in implementing countermeasures at each facility.

2. Positioning of the Guidelines

These Guidelines arrange basic actions that should be implemented as novel coronavirus (COVID-19) infection control measures at museums. They were prepared based on the government's "Basic Policies for Novel Coronavirus Disease Control" (approved by the Novel Coronavirus Response Headquarters on March 28, 2020 [revised on May 4, 2020]; hereinafter, "the Control Policies") and in response to a request for the preparation of guidelines that was presented in the Novel Coronavirus Expert Meeting's "Analysis and Recommendations of the Response to the Novel Coronavirus" (May 4, 2020; hereinafter, "the Recommendations").

The Control Policies state with regard to Prefectures under Specific Cautions that “It is thought that museums, art galleries, and libraries, for example, will open on the condition that they implement infection control measures, such as ensuring that people do not crowd together, with consideration for the risk of infection, in order to maintain residents’ healthy lives.” For prefectures that are not included in the Prefectures under Specific Cautions, it states “For facilities where clusters are not observed, they will strongly urge Facility Managers to fully implement basic infection control measures, such as carefully avoiding the ‘3-Cs,’ ventilating rooms and keeping an appropriate distance between people, and the like. This will include requesting the ‘restriction or guidance of entrants,’ ‘thorough handwashing and placement of facilities for sanitizing hands and fingers,’ ‘wearing masks,’ etc.”

Based on the aforementioned policies, these Guidelines, which are intended for museums throughout Japan, establish basic actions concerning infection control measures as a precondition for the opening of facilities and also establish concrete infection control measures for specific situations that are envisioned in museums with reference to Item 4. (2) of the Recommendations (“Points to be noted about the guidelines for preventing the spread of infection in each industry”) and its annexes “Example of practicing ‘New Lifestyle’” and “Regarding maintaining and relaxing emergency measures (administrative communication from the head of the Office for Novel Coronavirus Disease Control, Cabinet Secretariat of May 4, 2020).”

A person who manages a museum (hereinafter “Facility Manager”) shall, on the basis of a full understanding of the intent and content of the Control Policies, work to control COVID-19 infections, endeavor to ensure that the museum continues to serve its role as social infrastructure, and demonstrate originality in exhibit presentation while taking into account the manner of exhibition and other factors, with attention to “Basic thinking for infection control,” “Risk assessment,” and “Concrete measures to be implemented when holding exhibits (including permanent exhibits and outdoor exhibits)” presented in these Guidelines.

When making the decision on whether or not to open a facility, please continue to act appropriately in accordance with requests from the governor of the prefecture in which the facility is located. If you decide to keep your facility closed, it is desirable that you devise alternative ways for public access to information the museum can present (such as views and explanations of artworks in the facility’s collection) without visiting the facility, such as promoting the availability of content online.

Please note that we may make revisions to the content of these Guidelines as necessary based on future revisions to the Control Policies, developments surrounding COVID-19 infections, expert opinions, etc.

3. Basic thinking for infection control

A Facility Manager shall, based on full consideration of the facility’s size and form of its exhibits,

implement all available means within the facility and its surrounding area to prevent the spread of COVID-19 infection to employees of the facility and employees of private businesses, etc., that come and go from the facility (hereinafter “Workers”) as well as to people who visit the facility (hereinafter “Visitors”).

Given the possibility that the risk of spreading infection is particularly high in places where the three conditions of (1) closed spaces (closed areas with poor ventilation), (2) crowded places (places where many people are close together), and (3) close-contact settings (places where conversation and speaking take place within the distance between the outstretched arms of two people) (collectively referred to as “3Cs”) exist, these Guidelines aim to prevent the occurrence of such situations and to fully prevent the spread of infection to you and others.

4. Risk assessment

The Facility Manager shall assess the risk of both (1) contact infection and (2) droplet infection, which are the main COVID-19 infection routes, by taking into account the flow of movements, contact, etc., of Workers and Visitors and study countermeasures against that risk.

Additionally, given that attention-attracting special exhibits, popular permanent exhibits, and other such exhibits held with re-opening may induce the movement of many Visitors as well as people across prefectural boundaries, the Facility Manager must also give attention to assessing the risks mentioned in (3) and (4) below.

(1) Assessing the risk of contact infection

Identify items that are shared with others as well as places that are touched with the hands (e.g., doorknobs, etc.) and the frequency with which they are touched. Particular attention must be given to items with which people come into frequent contact (e.g., tables, seat backs and armrests, doorknobs, electrical switches, telephones, keyboards, tablet computers, touch panels, cash registers, faucets, handrails, elevator buttons, ticket machines, lent equipment [audio guide devices, wheelchairs, etc.]).

(2) Assessing the risk of droplet infection

Taking the facility’s ventilation into account, assess the amount of distance that can be maintained between people, locations in the facility where people will speak with loud voices, and other such matters.

(3) Assessing the risk of facility crowding

If restarting facility activities under the current circumstances, assess based on past facility visit records, etc., whether a large number of visitors can be expected, whether people visiting across prefectural boundaries can be expected, whether visitor numbers will stay within a range that will permit maintaining social distancing, and other such matters.

Additionally, assess the number of Visitors that can be accommodated by the facility as a whole and its rooms (including setting closed areas) for use as a criterion when making judgments concerning limiting admittance.

(4) Assessing the risk from the local infection situation

If the possibility that infections will spread locally is reported within the facility's neighborhood, assess the effects on the facility's management. If the risk of infection spreading remains, it may become necessary to strengthen countermeasures.

5. Concrete measures to be implemented when holding exhibits (including permanent exhibits and outdoor exhibits)

(1) General remarks

- It is important to fully implement infection control measures based on the Recommendations. This is premised on, for example, avoiding contact with people and securing person-to-person distance (aiming for two meters whenever possible).
- When admittance must be limited to prevent infections, restriction methods that suit the facility's circumstances are required. Possible measures include the following.
 - Limiting admission hours or the number of people admitted, etc.
 - Limiting the admission of big groups, etc.
 - Introducing a time/date reservation system or time-based visitor system
 - Introducing an invitation system
- Museums in Prefectures under Specific Cautions shall, based on the results of risk assessment, bear in mind requests from the governors of the prefectures in which their facilities are located and implement further countermeasures necessary to eliminate overcrowding and control infections both inside and outside their facilities. This could include implementing stricter admission restrictions or introducing a system for admission by reservation only, for example.
- When, as a result of the "risk assessment," it is deemed that a sufficient response is not possible even after implementing concrete measures, exhibits must be cancelled or postponed. The same shall apply to guided tours and programs in the facility (e.g., gallery talks, workshops, school-oriented programs, hands-on programs for children, etc.). (Likewise, when an event such as a public performance will be held by lending facilities to a third party, the organizer of the performance, etc., shall be urged to refrain from holding it.)
- A communication system with the local public health center should be established to ensure quick cooperation when implementing infection control measures or handling a possible case of infection.
- In view of the fact that senior citizens and people with pre-existing conditions have a higher risk for developing more severe complications if they become infected, be certain to study the implementation of even more careful and thoroughgoing countermeasures on the service side.

- If a person in the facility feels unwell and infection is suspected, responses like those below must be taken.
 - Isolate the person by immediately moving him or her to another room.
 - Have Workers responding to the situation take appropriate protective measures, such as wearing masks and gloves.
 - Send the person to a medical institution by requesting ambulance transport and ascertain the situation afterwards.
 - If it turns out the person was infected, implement subsequent measures, such as quickly disclosing information, with cooperation from the public health center, etc.
- Larger distances between Visitors and exhibits and display cases must be set and flows of movement must be considered ahead of time. These steps serve as a precaution against possible harmful effects on exposed exhibits and display cases if exhibit rooms and other areas will be disinfected under the direction of the public health center, etc., when a case of infection occurs.

(2) Actions to be implemented to ensure Visitors' safety

- In addition to asking Visitors to take their temperature before visiting the facility, post conditions under which Visitors will be asked to refrain from visiting on the facility's website or other media in advance and clearly display those conditions at the facility's entrance.
 - When having a temperature of 37.5°C or higher
 - When showing such symptoms as coughing or sore throat
 - When having visited a country or region in which infections continue to spread within the past two weeks and others
- It is also effective to check Visitors' temperature by thermography or other means and to refuse their admittance if they have a temperature at or above a certain value.
- A system that can alert Visitors when a case of infection occurs must be implemented (e.g., one that publicizes the fact that there was a case of infection on the website, encourages Visitors to record their date and time of their visit, etc.). One possible approach is to prepare a list containing Visitors' names and emergency contact information. However, in this case, it is necessary to handle personal information appropriately by, for example, notifying Visitors beforehand that this information may be provided to a public health center or other public institution when necessary.
- Request the practice of coughing manners, the wearing of masks, and handwashing/hand sanitizing. Be certain to use the most suitable sanitizers at appropriate places and conduct periodic checks to make sure there are no shortages (the same applies to following notations concerning disinfecting).
- Fully disinfect lent items, such as audio guides, strollers, and wheelchairs, and terminate their loaning if they cannot be fully disinfected.
- Do not hand out pamphlets and other distributed materials. Make them available by placing

them out instead.

(3) Actions to be implemented to ensure Workers' safety

- Know Workers' emergency contact information and the circumstances of their work.
- Urge Workers to periodically take their temperature and, particularly if they record a temperature of 37.5°C or higher, to receive a medical checkup from a medical institution, public health center, etc. Record the results of checkups in the museum. Moreover, have Workers stay home if they show any of the following symptoms in addition to a fever.

Coughing, labored breathing, general malaise, sore throat, nasal discharge or obstruction, loss of sense of taste or smell, eye pain or conjunctival hyperemia, headache, joint or muscular pain, diarrhea, nausea or vomiting

- Fully practice coughing manners, the wearing of masks, and handwashing/hand sanitizing.
- Wash uniforms and other items frequently.
- Use facility announcements, boards, and other means to provide information as a way of minimizing Workers' speaking to give explanations and guidance to Visitors concerning important points/reminders as well as occasions when Workers respond directly to Visitors' questions.
- Continuously devise ways of conducting job rotation, such as minimizing the number of people needed to manage and operate the facility.
- If a Worker is suspected of being infected, cooperate with interviews conducted by the public health center, etc., and provide the information required.

(4) Particularly important points to remember when holding exhibitions

- Maintain distance between Visitors by using floor markers or trying other approaches (minimum of one meter [aim for two meters if possible]).
- As a general rule, do not display exhibits that can be touched directly (i.e., hands-on exhibits) due to the high risk of infection. If displaying such exhibits cannot be avoided, have staff manage and thoroughly disinfect them. For works displayed outdoors, caution Visitors against touching them or try different ways of presenting them.
- Implement measures to keep large numbers of people from lingering around specific displays. For example, limit the number of people in each exhibit room (the exhibit area in the case of an outdoor display) or use automated announcements to remind Visitors to move on.
- Limit conversation in exhibit rooms (exhibit areas in the case of outdoor displays).
- Do not provide food or drink when an exhibition is held.

(5) Facility management

a) Inside facilities

- Thoroughly clean, disinfect, and ventilate.

- When queues form at entrances to exhibit rooms and other areas, take steps to ensure that crowding does not occur. For example, urge people to line up with spaces of at least one meter (aiming for two meters whenever possible) between them.
- Minimize items that are shared with others as well as places that are touched with the hands (e.g., doorknobs, etc.). Pay particular attention to items with which people come into frequent contact (e.g., tables, seat backs and armrests, doorknobs, electrical switches, telephones, keyboards, tablet computers, touch panels, cash registers, faucets, handrails, elevator buttons, ticket machines, loaned equipment [audio guide devices, wheelchairs, etc.]).
- Disinfection must be executed thoroughly to prevent infections during cleaning of exhibit rooms and particularly the glass surfaces of display cases. An effective way of reducing opportunities for Visitors to touch cases is to use partitions that create spaces between cases and Visitors.
- Ensure that people who do cleaning and waste disposal wear masks and gloves.
- Always wash hands after completing cleaning and waste disposal.

b) Service counters and windows

- Consider using online ticket sales or cashless payment to reduce the handling of cash as much as possible.
- When engaging in face-to-face sales, use an acrylic plate or transparent plastic curtain to create a screen between the seller and purchasers.
- When queues form at ticket windows, take steps to ensure that crowding does not occur. For example, urge people to line up with spaces of at least one meter (aiming for two meters whenever possible) between them.

c) Lobbies and rest areas

- Urge people to avoid eating, drinking, or conversing face-to-face.
- Take steps to ensure that people do not accumulate while resting by, for example, creating areas with spaces between them.
- Provide constant ventilation.
- Periodically disinfect tables, chairs, and other articles.
- When Workers use a lobby or rest area, ensure that they wash or disinfect their hands before and after entering and leaving.

d) Restrooms

- Clean and disinfect areas that are touched by unspecified large numbers of people.
- Post notices urging users to lower the toilet lid before flushing.
- Prepare paper towels or personal towels. Do not use hand dryers.
- (When restroom crowding is anticipated) Urge people to line up with spaces of at least one meter (aiming for two meters whenever possible) between them.

e) Restaurants, cafeterias, museum shops, etc.

Implement the following measures in cooperation with tenant businesses, etc.

- Using online ticket sales or cashless payment is recommended to reduce the handling of cash as much as possible.
- When engaging in face-to-face sales, use an acrylic plate or transparent plastic curtain to create a screen between the seller and purchasers.
- When providing food and drinks, take steps to position seating in each shop so that there is a distance of about two or more meters between one group (e.g., a family, etc.) and other groups.
- Implement admittance restrictions at crowded times.
- Thoroughly ventilate the facility.
- Thoroughly disinfect tableware, tables, chairs, etc.
- Employees working in eating/drinking facilities must thoroughly manage their health, wear masks, and sanitize their hands, and users of eating/drinking establishments must also sanitize their hands before entering.
- Wash uniforms and other clothing frequently.
- When engaging in sales of goods or souvenirs, do not provide samples that could be touched by many people.

(6) Public relations and publicity

- Ensure that the following rules are known by Workers and Visitors.
 - Refrain from coming the facility when certain health conditions are present (i.e., when having a temperature of 37.5°C or higher and such symptoms as coughing or a sore throat. Also, ask Workers and Visitors to refrain from coming to the facility if, in addition to a fever, they have coughing, labored breathing, general malaise, sore throat, nasal discharge or obstruction, loss of sense of taste or smell, eye pain or conjunctival hyperemia, headache, joint or muscular pain, diarrhea, nausea or vomiting.)
 - Fully maintain social distance.
 - Fully practice coughing manners, the wearing of masks, and handwashing/hand sanitizing.
 - Do not permit discrimination of any kind.
 - Fully observe these Guidelines and the response policy of each facility.

6. Concrete measures to be implemented by performance organizers when holding performances, etc., in the museum

When a lecture meeting, concert, play, or other public performance (hereinafter “Performance, etc.”) will be held at the facility, the following measures shall be implemented. The person/organization who should implement the measures at this time will be required to implement them in collaboration and cooperation with the Facility Manager, bearing in mind that he/she/it is the organizer of the Performance, etc.

a) Prior to the Performance, etc.

- For each Performance, etc., obtain the names and emergency contact information of Visitors to the Performance, etc. (hereinafter “Performance Visitors”) to the extent that is known beforehand and prepare a list for each Performance, etc. Additionally, notify Performance Visitors beforehand that this information may be provided to a public health center, etc., when necessary.
- Obtain the names and emergency contact information of staff members of the Performance, etc. (hereinafter “Performance Staff Members”) and prepare a list. Additionally, notify Performance Staff Members beforehand that this information may be provided to a public health center, etc., when necessary.
- Ensure that these Guidelines and the response policy of each facility are fully known by everyone concerned.
- Using online ticket sales or cashless payment is recommended to reduce the handling of cash as much as possible.
- Request temperature-taking prior to coming to the facility and make conditions for which people will be asked to refrain from coming broadly known.

b) Day of the Performance, etc.

- Implement the following measures as infection control measures for Performance Visitors.
 - Implement body-temperature management, hygiene management, etc.
 - Encourage the wearing of masks and periodic hand sanitation.
 - As a general rule, establish designated seating.
 - Secure sufficient seat spacing (e.g., use a seating arrangement with spaces on all four sides).
 - Make it broadly known that Performance Visitors should avoid coming into contact with each other during the Performance, etc.
 - Do not hold performances that create contact with Performance Visitors (e.g., having Performance Visitors come onto the stage, giving high fives, etc.)
 - Restrict conversation in the venue.
 - When selling goods relating to the Performance, etc., face-to-face, use an acrylic plate or transparent plastic curtain to create a screen between the seller and purchasers.
- Implement the following measures as infection control measures for Performance Staff Members.
 - Admit only the minimum number of people necessary for the event’s operation.
 - Fully practice the wearing of masks and hand sanitation.
 - Have Performance Staff Members take their temperature at home and stay home if they have a temperature of 37.5°C or higher. Moreover, urge them to stay home if they have

any of the following symptoms in addition to a fever.

Coughing, labored breathing, general malaise, sore throat, nasal discharge or obstruction, loss of sense of taste or smell, eye pain or conjunctival hyperemia, headache, joint or muscular pain, diarrhea, nausea or vomiting

- Know Performance Staff Members' emergency contact information and the circumstances of their work.
- If a Performance Staff Member is suspected of being infected, cooperate with interviews conducted by the public health center, etc., and provide the information required.
- Take the temperatures of Performance Visitors and restrict admittance to those who fall under the following.
 - When the Performance Visitor's temperature was taken before visiting the facility and resulted in a reading of 37.5°C or higher
 - When the Performance Visitor shows any of the aforementioned symptoms for urging Performance Staff Members to stay home, such as cough or sore throat
 - When the Performance Visitor visited a country or region in which infections continue to spread within the past two weeks
- When queues form at the entrance to the venue for the Performance, etc., take steps to ensure that crowding does not occur. For example, urge people to line up with spaces of at least one meter (aiming for two meters whenever possible) between them.
- When setting up a ticket window specifically for the Performance, etc., and selling tickets face-to-face, use an acrylic plate or transparent plastic curtain to create a screen between the seller and purchasers.
- Ventilate the venue before and after the Performance, etc., and during breaks.
- Take steps such as having people enter and leave the venue at times staggered by ticket type or seating zone.
- Call on people to refrain from waiting for performers to enter or exit the backdoor.
- If a person suspected of being infected emerges during the Performance, etc., handle him or her in the manner described in 5 (1).
- If a person suspected of being infected emerges following the Performance, etc., cooperate with interviews conducted by the public health center or other public institution and provide the information required.

Remarks: Please refer to the following information regarding the implementation of infection control measures in museums.

- Responses to COVID-19 (national policies, etc.): <https://corona.go.jp> (Cabinet Secretariat)
- Regarding responses concerning infectious disease countermeasures associated with COVID-19 (Agency for Cultural Affairs):
https://www.bunka.go.jp/koho_hodo_oshirase/sonota_oshirase/20200206.html

Support for people involved in culture and arts in supplementary budget proposals, etc., for FY2020

(Regarding infection control measures programs [subsidies] for cultural facilities [museums and theaters/concert halls])

https://www.bunka.go.jp/koho_hodo_oshirase/sonota_oshirase/pdf/20200206_10.pdf

▪ Regarding economic support measures for businesses, etc., that support business activities at museums and theaters/concert halls (May 1, 2020)

https://www.bunka.go.jp/koho_hodo_oshirase/sonota_oshirase/pdf/202005011715_01.pdf

▪ Regarding the contact desk for the disinfecting of works at art galleries, museums, etc., pertaining to COVID-19 infectious disease control (April 24, 2020)

https://www.bunka.go.jp/koho_hodo_oshirase/sonota_oshirase/pdf/202005011715_01.pdf

* In spaces in which cultural assets and various materials are exhibited and stored, such as museums, it is desirable to wait for inactivation without using disinfectants and the like. However, under the current conditions, it is presumed that such measures as use of disinfectants and non-standard ventilation will be deemed necessary. Facilities that have doubts or questions concerning the preservation of their cultural assets and materials in this event are urged to contact the aforementioned “contact desk for disinfecting of works.”

▪ Independent guidelines by a museum type-specific organization:

Japanese Association of Zoos and Aquariums (provisional version)