

Keeping Healthy – Guidelines When Using Orientation & Mobility Techniques

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Attention to Health

Many Orientation and Mobility (O&M) techniques used by individuals with vision impairment, legal blindness or deafblindness involve touching of canes, doors, handrails, walls and more in both public and private locations; and also at times require close person to person contact. The following guidelines with attention to reducing the possibility of contacting and/or spreading bacteria, germs and viruses, offer suggestions for everyone's health and safety. Please also be sure to consult with your local nurse educator or infection control educator with questions related to specific circumstances or individuals.

General Suggestions for Keeping Healthy:

Follow Manufacturer's Instructions for Cleaning and Sanitation of Surfaces

- Always follow the manufacturer recommendations for care, cleaning, sanitation, and maintenance information of regularly touched surfaces such as handrails, furniture, walls, door knobs, and more in private spaces.
- Contact customer service with any specific questions regarding which cleaning and sanitizing products are safe to use for the item or surface.

Handwashing

- Whenever possible, prior to and after use of Human Guide, Trailing, Protective Techniques, Cane or Adaptive Cane use and/or other orientation and mobility techniques, individual (and guide) should wash hands for 20 seconds, following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for proper hand washing.
- If soap and water is not readily available, hand sanitizer or hand sanitizing wipes with at least 60% alcohol should be used.

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Face Mask

- Face mask(s) should be worn during use of O&M techniques including Human Guide, especially as social distance cannot be kept during use of the technique.

Eye Protection

- Wear eye protection in addition to a facemask to ensure the eyes, nose, and mouth are all protected from exposure to respiratory secretions during direct encounters where a social distance cannot be maintained. Face shields or goggles are considered appropriate eye protection; prescription glasses alone are not.

Human Guide

Depending upon life/work circumstance, Human Guides may frequently guide multiple individuals over the course of a day. Proper use of disposable sleeves or alternatives helps to keep arms and clothing clean from dirt, particulates, germs and liquids; and provides a level of protection from possible cross-contamination.

- Guide should be prepared with face mask(s), eye protection and disposable gloves. Hand washing for at least 20 seconds or use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer should occur both before and after use of the technique.
- Although cough etiquette (pre-COVID 19) suggests covering a cough or sneeze into the elbow/upper sleeve, it must be noted that individuals while using Human Guide are often gripping this same area (that many have used to shield a cough or sneeze). At this time, coughing or sneezing must occur into the mask. Guides must be prepared with additional masks to use if the one they are wearing becomes soiled.
- Disposable sleeves can also be worn to cover the upper arm. To remove the sleeve when needed and not self-contaminate or contaminate others, please:
 - Wearing nitrile/disposable gloves peel the sleeve away from the top, turning it inside out.
 - Roll the sleeve into a bundle and discard in a trash receptacle.
 - To remove gloves, grasp the outside edge near the wrist.
 - Peel the glove away from the hand, turning the glove inside out. Hold it in the opposite gloved hand.

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Human Guide (continued)

- Slide an ungloved finger under the wrist of the remaining glove, then peel it off from the inside, creating a “bag” for both used gloves. Discard in trash receptacle.
- Alternatives to use in place of disposable sleeves:
 - If bare arm(s), Human Guide must wash hands and arm(s) before and after guiding an individual.
 - Have change(s) of clothing on hand (such as long sleeved shirts and/or additional outer layers) so that the upper sleeve(s) are clean and fresh for use of Human Guide.
 - Protective arm sleeves could be made of fabric and re-used after laundering.
 - All clothing/fabric items must be laundered after each use.
- The individual who is being guided may also choose to wear washable gloves if practical/possible.

Wear Gloves, Use Elbow if Practical/Possible in Public Spaces to Open Doors

- Especially when in public spaces if practical and/or possible, wear washable gloves for touching doors, buttons, handrails, etc.
- Be sure not to touch your face with the gloves and store in a separate small bag so as not to touch other belongings when out. Wash regularly after use.

Trailing

Trailing incorporates the use of surfaces such as handrails, tables and walls in order to orient and direct an individual's route. These surfaces should be cleaned prior to use.

- Follow cleaning instructions of the surface manufacturer and contact with any cleaning and sanitation questions.
- General cleaning guidelines include use of liquid soap, warm water and a clean soft cloth to wipe the trailing surface for at least 20 seconds in each area and dry thoroughly with a clean cloth.
- Alternatively wipe the surface with a Clorox, Lysol or similar disinfecting wipe for removing bacteria, germs and viruses with at least 60% alcohol, and let air dry.

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Trailing (continued)

- Trailing surfaces should be cleaned multiple times daily year-round, with extra cleaning as needed during cold and flu season.

Self-Protective Techniques

Many individuals hold an object (i.e. basket) or push a device (i.e. cart, wheelchair, walker, adaptive mobility device) in order to protect themselves when walking through open space in a familiar environment. These objects and handles should be cleaned prior to use.

- Follow cleaning instructions for the objects and handles of the devices from manufacturer(s) and contact with any cleaning and sanitation questions.
- General cleaning and sanitation guidelines are same as that for Trailing surfaces including use of warm water and soap and/or disinfecting wipes.
- Objects and handles should be cleaned multiple times daily year-round, with extra cleaning as needed during cold and flu season.
- When objects and devices are not being used, store in a clean location.

Folding Canes, Long Canes and Adaptive Mobility Devices

- Please see MCB/DDS Partnership “Focus” resource:

All Clean - Keeping Glasses, Canes, Visual Aids, Cell Phones and Devices Spotless and Sanitized

<https://www.focusonvisionandvisionloss.org/downloadable-resources--videos.html>

Resources

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention Guidelines for Handwashing

- <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>

Disposable Sleeves

- As product availability changes frequently by company, please use internet search terms for “disposable sleeves” or “protective sleeves” to locate a supplier.

Please note: These Web links are being offered only as informational resources.
It is not our intention to endorse or recommend the sites.

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Resources (continued)

Donning and Removing of Personal Protective Equipment

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/using-ppe.html>
- <https://www.infectioncontroltoday.com/personal-protective-equipment/donning-and-removing-ppe-infection-prevention>

Wheelchair Users Precautions for COVID-19

- <https://adanc.org/wp-content/uploads/WC-AT-COVID-19-Precautions-1mb-2020-03-27-0745-1.pdf>

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Please also see MCB/DDS Partnership “Focus” resource:

- All Clean - Keeping Glasses, Canes, Visual Aids, Cell Phones and Devices Spotless and Sanitized
- COVID-19 Protocol for Use of the Human Guide Technique

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