

Equipment Cleaning Guidelines for Personal Assistive Listening Devices (ALD) in an EDUCATIONAL SETTING during COVID-19:



SD #7 (Powell River)

Auditory Outreach Provincial Resource Program

The guidelines below are recommended for EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS only to assist users of loaned devices from the Auditory Outreach, PRP. Please note different protocols apply in health care settings. These recommendations were developed based on sources including protocols from BC Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry (as of May 23, 2020), BC Centre for Disease Control on infection control, and assistive listening device (ALD) manufacturer Phonak's recommendations on equipment sanitization. Any information provided here does not override any provincial protocols, those of a professional regulatory body, or employer.

COVID-19 is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation. Please check resources, including BC Centre for Disease Control <http://www.bccdc.ca/schools> and the Government of Canada <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html> for the latest public health information.

1. Contact with Student and Personal Equipment (e.g. hearing aids, CI processors, remote microphone receivers)

- Physical contact with students (e.g. touching student's ear) and their devices should be minimized, unless it is essential for the proper use of hearing equipmentⁱ. If behavioural checks find possible equipment malfunction or a younger student requires help with putting on their devices, the trained TDHH, EA, teacher, or designated staff member should use proper hand hygieneⁱⁱ BEFORE and AFTER contacting the students and/or their equipment.

2. Attachment and Removal of Personal Receivers:

- RM receivers are frequently-touched surfaces and should be disinfected twice a dayⁱⁱⁱ. This is accomplished by wiping all surfaces of the RM receivers with a water-based surface disinfectant or a surface disinfectant such as disposable wipes with 70% isopropanol^{iv}. Use of bleach, hydrogen peroxide or any other disinfectants will cause damage to the loaned devices. In all cleaning, please blot away excess moisture with a new disposable paper towel to avoid equipment damage from moisture^v.
- To minimize physical contact, whenever possible and if student is trained in handling of the equipment, have student attach and remove RM receivers from their hearing aid (HA) or CI processor themselves.
- If help from an adult is necessary, adult should use proper hand hygiene BEFORE and AFTER handling student's personal equipment.
- Prior to attaching the RM receiver to the HA/CI, wipe all surfaces with a surface disinfectant as noted above.
- At the end of the school day, disinfect personal receivers by wiping them with a surface disinfectant as noted above.

3. Handling of RM Transmitters (FM, DM, Soundfield Microphones, Pass-around Microphones, Etc.):

- BEFORE and AFTER handling an RM transmitter, the staff should use proper hand hygiene.
- RM Transmitters should be cleaned and disinfected at least twice a day and if they are to be shared, in between users. This is accomplished by (1) the removal of visible dirt with a dry tissue or paper towel, followed by (2) wiping all surfaces of the transmitter with a disinfectant wipe as noted above for RM receivers.
- Pass-around microphones should only be used if disinfection between users is possible. Disinfection is accomplished by wiping all surfaces of the pass-around microphone with a disinfectant wipe. Prior to and after handling the pass-around microphone, the student/teacher should use proper hand hygiene.

- Accessories, including belt clips and lanyards, may also be sanitized with a disinfectant wipe.
- When sanitizing the area around the microphone openings, please ensure the disinfectant wipe is absolutely free of excess moisture to avoid damage to the equipment.

4. Monitoring of Equipment Function:

- As BEHAVIOURAL CHECKS are normally conducted from a distance (i.e. 2 metres to check HA/CI function and 3 metres to check RM), they are the best way to monitor students' equipment during this time and should be conducted on a daily basis, preferably before the start of each school day and whenever class resumes after breaks.
- Whenever possible, maintain a distance of 2 metres from the student when conducting ALD functionality checks.
- When socially distancing, LISTENING CHECKS of student's personal equipment with hearing aid stethoscope or monitor earphones should ONLY be conducted IF behavioural checks find possible equipment malfunction. Proper hand hygiene should be used prior to and after handling student's equipment. If the tools for listening checks (i.e. hearing aid stethoscope or CI monitor earphones) are used with multiple students, the tools should be cleaned and disinfected in between users. This is accomplished by (1) the removal of visible dirt with a dry tissue or paper towel, followed by (2) wiping all surfaces of the stethoscope/ earphones with a disinfectant wipe.

5. ALD Storage:

- As always, all ALD should be stored in a secure, dry, and sanitized place.
- The exterior and interior of the case(s) should be wiped daily with a disinfectant wipe. The case(s) should then be stored in a secure location, e.g. drawer at teacher's desk. It is recommended RM receivers be stored in a case with a secure lid or zipper.
- As RM transmitters need to be charged at the end of the day, it is recommended they be stored in a dry secure place near a power outlet. The surfaces of the storage area should be wiped daily with a disinfectant wipe.

REFERENCES:

ⁱ Henry, Bonnie (2020). Letter to Health Care Workers dated March 23, 2020: "all non-essential and elective services involving direct physical contact with patients and clients should be reduced to minimal levels". <https://www.cdsbc.org/Documents/covid-19/PHO-Letter-Non-Essential-Services-Health-Mar-23-20.pdf> "Staying 2 metres apart is not always feasible and is not expected in child care settings, where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is low... Staff caring for young children should not avoid appropriate physical contact."

ⁱⁱ BC Ministry of Health (2011). Best Practice Guidelines for Cleaning, Disinfection and Sterilization of Critical and Semi-critical Medical Devices, p.11: "Hand Hygiene relates to the removal of visible soil and removal or killing of transient microorganisms from the hands ... using soap and running water or an alcohol-based hand rub".

ⁱⁱⁱ BC Centre for Disease Control (2020). Covid-19: Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for Community-based Allied Health Care Providers in Clinic Settings.

^{iv} Phonak Canada (2020). Guideline (Covid 19) on Sanitization of Roger products in Classrooms. Webinar dated April 28, 2020.

^v BC Centre for Disease Control. Cleaning and Disinfecting. <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/cleaning-and-disinfecting>. Retrieved September 1, 2021. "Check the manufacturer's instructions for cleaning and disinfecting. If no manufacturer guidance is available, use disinfectant wipes or sprays with at least 70% alcohol. Dry surfaces thoroughly to avoid pooling of liquids."