

Guidelines for Preventing the Spread of Infections with the Resumption of Interpersonal Keiko (Taijin-teki-keiko)

All Japan Kendo Federation

Introduction

The All Japan Kendo Federation (AJKF) established the “Guidelines for Preventing the Spread of Infections with the Resumption of Interpersonal Keiko (Taijin-teki-keiko)” on June 4, 2020. Since then, as kendo practitioners have followed these guidelines, there have been no outbreaks of clusters observed due to kendo keiko. In addition, while COVID-19 infections have not been contained over the past year, vaccinations have begun to make progress. The AJKF has revised the “Guidelines for Preventing the Spread of Infections with the Resumption of Interpersonal Keiko” (hereafter referred to as “AJKF Guidelines”) in light of these circumstances and in consideration of the following: (1) kendo keiko can fall under what are known as the “three Cs” (closed spaces, crowded places, and close-contact settings); (2) there are many droplets that can be a source of infection for COVID-19; (3) the new coronavirus can be transmitted from asymptotically infected people; and (4) mutations of the virus are increasing.

Kendo practitioners are asked to follow these guidelines in keiko. Furthermore, each organization should refer to the AJKF Guidelines and work to create their own guidelines based on the infection situation in their region, membership composition (age, gender, level of training), practice location, weather conditions, etc.

Guidelines

1. Conducting keiko

- Prefectural kendo federations will comply with prefectural policies when conducting *keiko* within the prefecture, and, when necessary, notify the prefectural sports bureau and the department of health and welfare.

2. Formulating guidelines and keiko plans

- Referring to the AJKF Guidelines, each organization and group will create its own guidelines depending on characteristics of the organizations and groups. These guidelines shall be posted in training venues such as dojo and distributed to members to ensure that they are thoroughly implemented.
- Each organization and group will create a training plan according to its particular situation. Pay attention to the following items when developing a plan:

✓ In addition to concerns about increasing number of COVID-19 infections, it is possible that the physical condition of practitioners may have declined due the long period of self-restraint. Therefore, please resume *keiko* carefully. In other words, draw up a basic plan that focuses on warming-up exercises, fitness, and *suburi*, and then gradually increase the training load.

As the weather is about to become hotter, it is especially important to take measures against heat stroke. The following is a summary of these measures. In addition to these, please refer to the AJKF's articles on heat stroke precautions (<https://www.kendo.or.jp/knowledge/medicine-science/heatstroke/>) and acclimatizing to the heat (<https://www.kendo.or.jp/knowledge/medicine-science/heatadaptability/>).

✓ As the membership structure of each organization and group varies, create a suitable plan for your needs. If there are students in your organization, the guidelines set forth by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (May 28, 2021) (https://www.mext.go.jp/content/20210531-mxt_kouhou01-000004520_2.pdf), regarding changes in the basic policy for dealing with COVID-19 infections, should be respected.

3. Participating in keiko

- People with underlying conditions should not participate in keiko.
- Underlying conditions refers to people with diabetes, heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), undergoing dialysis, etc.
- If people with these conditions intend to participate in *keiko*, consent from a doctor should be obtained beforehand.
- COVID-19 vaccinations
Vaccination is encouraged as it reduces the incidence and severity of the disease.
- People who meet the following conditions cannot participate in keiko:
 - ① If you are not feeling well.
 - ② If you have symptoms such as a fever, cough, sore throat.
 - ③ You may be infected but asymptomatic, so if you feel your condition is different than normal, consider carefully whether to participate in *keiko*.
 - ④ If a family member living with you or a close acquaintance is suspected of being infected.
 - ⑤ People who within the last 14 days have travelled to or had close contact with a person from a country or region that is restricted by the government, or after entry have had to undergo a period of observation.

- When non-members participate in keiko, or when training jointly with other organizations, the person in charge of keiko should make sure that practitioners from other organizations comply with the rules of the host organization, through such means as checking temperature, disinfecting hands, and confirming contact information.
- People who participate in keiko must wear a mask to prevent infection when travelling between their home and place of practice.

Notes for Elderly Practitioners

If elderly people are infected with COVID-19, they are more likely to become seriously ill, and the mortality rate is high. Therefore, for practitioners who are 60 or over, they should think more carefully about taking part in keiko than those who are younger.

4. Before keiko starts

- ① Take your temperature before training and do not participate if you have a fever.
- ② If you do not have a fever but have a cough and/or sore throat, do not participate.
- ③ Before *keiko* wash the hands, gargle and use alcohol to disinfect the fingers.
- ④ Register your name and contact information at the dojo (training hall) each time you practice.
- ⑤ Change into training wear at home or use the changing room in shifts to avoid it becoming crowded. In addition, the practice area is thoroughly ventilated. Wear a mask when changing.
- ⑥ Wet clean or mop floors. Sterilize other shared items.
- ⑦ It is recommended that elderly practitioners should receive two doses of a vaccine before participating in keiko. It is also recommended that they rest for at least one week after vaccination before participating.

5. At keiko

- ① Pay attention to sufficiently ventilate the dojo or training room (micro droplets can be blown away by ventilation).
Dojo windows and doors should be left open and air conditioners and blowers should be used for this purpose.
- ② When a fan is used, blow the air at an upward or downward angle so that it diffuses throughout the room.
- ③ As a rule, when doing warming-up exercises, *suburi*, etc., do so in one line with everyone facing the same way, not facing each other. If practitioners must face

each other, or make more than two rows, they should be at a distance of approximately 2m apart. Refrain from vocalizing (*hassei*) as much as possible.

- ④ To reduce the risk of infection, keiko should be shorter than usual (no more than 30 minutes at a time).
- ⑤ During breaks between keiko, open windows and doors completely for about 5 minutes, and use a fan to provide adequate ventilation.
- ⑥ To stop droplets spraying from practitioners' mouths during *keiko*, please take the following measures.
 - (a) To prevent droplets spraying onto the opponent, wear a mask (hereafter, "Men-mask"). Men-masks should be worn with the nose covered.
 - (b) To avoid breathing difficulties, use a Men-mask made from a type of breathable material which has become popular recently. It is recommended to use something that is not tight around the chin area to allow breath to escape to the sides. Placing something like an inner frame under the mask to create a space between it and your mouth may help you to breathe more easily.
 - (c) As the mutated strain of COVID-19 is prevalent, wearing a mouth shield is mandatory as an effective measure to prevent coming into contact with droplets from the opponent. The mouth shield is a sheet-like implement that is attached to the inside of the mengane and is made of a material such as polycarbonate laminate. However, the material to be used is not specified.
 - (d) Using shields that cover the eyes and nose are also recommended.
- ⑦ Special attention should be paid to the following points when using these implements to prevent the heat stroke.
 - (a) It is important that your body becomes accustomed to the heat, so you should undertake heat acclimatization. (See below for more information.
<https://www.kendo.or.jp/knowledge/medicine-science/heatadaptability/>)
 - (b) Check the temperature and humidity on the day of keiko. Pay particular attention to the temperature and ventilation in the dojo.
 - (c) Drink water before keiko and during breaks to stay hydrated. Please pay particular attention to hydration.
 - (d) Wearing a Men-mask and shield in hot weather is hard on the body, so keiko time should be shorter than usual. (Less than 30 minutes per session is recommended.)
 - (e) If you do not feel right, do not overexert yourself.

(f) Keep an eye on the people around you and don't let them overexert themselves.

(g) Maintain a regular lifestyle and take care of your health.

Using a Men-mask and a shield is an interim measure until COVID-19 infections have completely finished. The AJKF would also like practitioners to take other steps, such as shortening *keiko* time as described above, in combination with using protective equipment. The AJKF will continue to conduct surveys to ascertain safety practices.

6. After keiko

- ① When keiko has finished, keep a distance of at least 2m from your sensei, senpai, etc. when doing rei.
- ② When *keiko* has finished, put the Men-mask in a plastic bag to take home. Wash and disinfect.
- ③ After *keiko*, disinfect your *kendo-gu* (especially *men* and *kote*) and shield with alcohol spray.
- ④ After every *keiko* it is recommended that the *kendo-gi*, *hakama*, *tenugui*, and *shinai* are taken home, washed and disinfected.
- ⑤ After *keiko* wash your hands, face-wash, gargle, and use alcohol to disinfect fingers.
- ⑥ Do not eat and/or drink as a group after keiko.

7. If an infection is confirmed

If a keiko participant develops a COVID-19 infection, they must immediately inform the person in charge of the organization or group. The person in charge of keiko should report the details of an infection using the “Online Form for Reporting COVID-19 Infections in Kendo” on the AJKF website.

(<https://www.kendo.or.jp/information/20201225/>).

Conclusion

Although the AJKF Guidelines have been developed with the cooperation of experts, there is not necessarily a sufficient body of scientific knowledge on how to prevent infections of COVID-19. For this reason, please note that these guidelines have been prepared based on the knowledge available at the present time. Also, it should be noted that this information may be revised in accordance with the further accumulation of knowledge and the infection situation in each region.