

## Is it safe to reopen spa thermal baths?

Press release of the French National Academy of Medicine

May 12, 2021

During summer 2020, the spa thermal baths were authorized to operate until the end of October, which allowed them to welcome 190,000 curists, or 30% of their usual activity. They had accepted to respect a quality charter with a health protocol validated by the General Directorate of Health (DGS). The implementation of this protocol had been facilitated by training actions for professionals and information to the different actors of the resorts (local authorities, accommodation providers, catering professionals, shopkeepers, etc.).

Sporadic cases of Covid-19 were nevertheless observed in about thirty curists and less than ten thermal agents. Fortunately, no cluster was identified within a thermal establishment during the investigations carried out by the Health Regional Agencies (ARS).

The recommendations of the French National Academy of Medicine [1] had been followed, although some measures (presentation of a RT-PCR test result on the arrival at the spa and measurement of the body temperature at the entrance in a thermal bath) had only been applied in a minority of establishments.

Considering the prospect of a reopening of the thermal baths from May 19, 2021, **the French National Academy of Medicine considers necessary to remind and update its recommendations.**

The essential measures recommended in June 2020 [1] remain unchanged: barrier measures (physical distancing, wearing of masks, hand hygiene); heating of thermal mud; hygiene and disinfection of premises, equipment and places of care; daily supply of linen, masks and disposable overshoes; suspension of collective treatments in a misting atmosphere; control by the administrative supervisory authorities.

Faced with the persistence of the pandemic, other points should be considered:

- **Vaccination:** every curist should be vaccinated against Covid-19, or in the course of vaccination (1st dose at least 15 days old), and be able to present a vaccination certificate at his/her arrival in the thermal bath. Otherwise, they should present a certificate attesting to a negative RT-PCR test of less than 48 hours. The staff of the thermal baths must be assimilated to health professionals and benefit as a priority of the anti-Sars-CoV-2 vaccination.
- **Physical distancing:** in collective swimming pools, a distance of 2 meters must be observed between each bather; individual places of care must be equipped with materialized separations, especially in establishments welcoming people with airway diseases.

- **Air treatment:** the air must be renewed, and if possible purified using a UV lamp; regular measurement of the CO<sub>2</sub> level in rooms during frequentation periods is useful for estimating the risk of air confinement and regulating the air renewal procedures.

1. ANM Press Release "Thermal Cures and Covid-19", 15 June 2020