

# Sports Activities

The following guidance will help sports facility employers and workers, sports organizations, volunteers, officials/referees, coaches, and trainers protect themselves and others from COVID-19. This document also contains useful tips for players, parents, spectators, and other attendees. Please note that any sports activity should not resume until federal, provincial, and local public health authorities have determined it is safe to do so.

## How to Protect Yourself and Others from COVID-19

### As a worker or participant:

- Stay informed, be prepared and follow public health advice.
  - Use reliable sources for credible information about COVID-19, such as the Public Health Agency of Canada: [www.Canada.ca/coronavirus](http://www.Canada.ca/coronavirus).
- Follow the advice of your local public health authority if you have been in contact with someone known or suspected to have COVID-19.
- Monitor yourself for symptoms of COVID-19. If you have symptoms or are feeling sick:
  - Stay at home and away from others.
  - Contact your health care provider or local public health authority and follow their advice.
- If you become sick while at work:
  - Isolate yourself in a designated area, away from others.
  - Tell your supervisor that you are going home.
  - Avoid taking public transit (e.g. bus, train, taxi) if possible.
- If you are at higher risk of becoming seriously ill, limit the time you spend outside of your home in the community and avoid crowds as much as possible.
- Practice good hygiene:
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol.
  - Do not touch your face with unwashed hands.
  - Cough or sneeze into the bend of your arm or a tissue.
- Keep a physical distance of 2 metres from others when outside of your home.
- Follow advice from your employer or your organization about using a non-medical mask in the workplace. Wearing a non-medical mask or face covering is recommended when you cannot consistently keep 2 metres away from others, especially in crowded settings.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched or shared surfaces and objects often.

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## As an employer:

- **Actively encourage workers or participants to stay home if they have symptoms of COVID-19, even if mild.**
- **Use a screening questionnaire from a public health agency.**
- **Develop a flexible attendance policy that allows workers or participants to stay home if they are sick or need to care for a sick family member.**
- **Post signs to remind everyone to follow healthy hygiene practices. Make sure that signs can be understood by everyone who uses the facility.**
- **Provide increased access to hand hygiene facilities (e.g., place hand sanitizer dispensers in easy to see locations) and make sure that workers, volunteers and users with disabilities or other accommodation needs can access them.**
- **Provide disinfecting wipes to workers and volunteers so they can clean and disinfect their personal work environments often.**
- **Promote physical distancing and create physical barriers (e.g. plexiglass windows) between workers and volunteers when physical distancing is not possible.**
- **Involve your health and safety committee or representative when assessing workplace risks and determining appropriate personal protective equipment and training.**

## Risk Factors of Sports Activities

Participation in a sports activity, whether as a player, coach, trainer, official, worker, volunteer, spectator or other role, may involve close contact with other people. This can increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission if appropriate measures are not taken. Guidance from public health agencies, municipalities and sport governing bodies about the type of activities that are allowed, the number of people that can gather for an event, and other infection control guidelines must be followed. Be aware that these measures may change as the pandemic continues.

When determining the preventative measures that should be in place, risk factors and considerations include:

- Is the activity done by individuals at the same time such as yoga or tennis, or is it a team sport such as basketball, hockey, or soccer?
- Does the activity involve intense physical effort (increased or forceful breathing)?
- Is the activity played by a team with dedicated players or do participants “drop in”?
- Is the activity crowded (high density of people)?
- How frequent, how long, and how close are the physical interactions among workers and participants?
- Is equipment shared between players?
- Do workers, coaches, volunteers, and officials frequently have contact with high touch surfaces?
- Can individuals arrive ready to participate and leave immediately after, or is the use of a change room or shower facility required?
- Is a hand washing station or alcohol-based hand sanitizer available for use?

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As an example, consider the following sport activities listed from lowest to highest risk:

1. Training at home, either alone or with people that live in your household.
2. Individual activities led by an instructor, where physical distancing can be maintained.
3. Training and practicing with a team (or cohort).
4. Competing against other members on your team.
5. Competing against teams from the same local geographic area.
6. Competing against teams from different geographic areas.

**Note: Sports activities performed outdoors are lower risk compared to indoor activities.**

## Screening

- Inform everyone about preventative measures that are in place.
- Inform people that they are to stay home and follow advice from their local public health authority if they have any symptoms or have been in contact with someone suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, or are required to quarantine due to travel from outside Canada.
- Post signs at entrances, in parking lots and in other accessible areas that list COVID-19 symptoms and that any person experiencing symptoms must not enter the facility or participate in any sports activity.
- Screen all players for symptoms before any activity. Have the coach or a designated person ask screening questions or have players complete a questionnaire.
- Establish procedures to help people that become ill during the day or activity. Make sure they are separated away from others until they can be safely sent home or sent for medical attention as soon as possible.
- Record the names and contact information of all workers, players, attendees, etc. at each activity to assist with contact tracing if needed. This list can be digital or assigned to an individual to track). Make sure the list is protected and used only for contact tracing purposes.
- If a person involved with a sports activity is confirmed to have COVID-19, consult with the local public health agency for guidance on next steps. A COVID-19 outbreak may require further restrictions on sports activities, and employers and organizations must be ready to respond accordingly. Public health guidance may include quarantine of a whole team or large group, and close contacts, for the required period.
- Consider additional measures to protect workers with risk factors for severe illness from COVID-19, such as telework, or avoiding crowded situations.

## Physical Distancing

- Workers, volunteers, referees, and coaches should stay 2 metres apart from each other, and from players and other attendees as much as possible. Consider having designated areas for people to sit or stand, use screens, physical barriers, floor markings or other visual cues, and having team meetings in areas where physical distancing can be maintained.
- Consult with relevant sports associations in your region for guidance regarding return to play and person-to-person interactions.
- Maintain physical distancing between players as much as possible during training, drills, stretching, and any non-activity or rest periods.
- Consider the use of non-medical masks when physical distancing is not possible.
- Explore whether the activity can be performed outdoors or other modifications to promote physical distancing.
- Ask individuals, which may include parents, officials, coaches, workers or volunteers, to monitor and encourage physical distancing during the activity.

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- Schedule enough time between each activity to minimize interactions and to allow for proper cleaning and disinfecting.
- If your facility has multiple venues or playing areas, consider staggering events to allow for air exchange, physical distancing, and cleaning.
- To minimize contact between different players and coaches, consider limiting activities to defined cohorts or a small group of players and coaches where possible. Cohorts could mean:
  - Grouping players and coaches involved in the same sport and same age level together.
  - Grouping players and coaches on the same team or opposing team that always play with or against each other.
- Do not rotate or share coaches and trainers. Have them involved with a specific team where possible.
- Each cohort should stay physically distant from other cohorts.
- Rearrange and limit use of seating areas, dressing rooms, common areas, lobbies, washrooms, etc. to promote physical distancing.
- If possible, limit the number of players on each team.
- Use online methods for registration and completion of forms and waivers.
- Limit the number of people allowed to enter a facility, in accordance with public health guidelines on gathering limits.
- Consider whether parents/guardians or other family members need to attend a sports activity. Exceptions may be necessary for young children and persons requiring accommodation. Limit spectators to one family member or use a rotation schedule so families can attend together but each family does not attend every game. Have designated areas in place for these attendees. If physical distancing is not possible, non-medical face masks should be worn.
- Instruct people not to arrive early and to leave promptly after the event. Do not allow people to gather in parking lots or other common areas.
- Establish one-way routes where appropriate.
- Develop procedures and mark areas for player drop offs and pickups.
- Discourage the use of carpooling but if it is necessary, ask the driver and passengers to wear non-medical face masks.

## Personal Hygiene

- Provide frequent reminders and guidance about hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- Post signs at entrances, in washrooms, and other areas.
- Everyone should wash their hands when entering and exiting the facility. Hand wash or hand sanitizer stations should be well-stocked and easy to find.
- Coaches and trainers should have hand sanitizer available for their players, where possible.
- Consider having everyone carry their own hand sanitizer (depending on the age and maturity of players) and encourage its use before and after touching shared equipment and surfaces, or after being in contact with another person. Hand hygiene should also be performed before and after the activity, , and after blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Each player should have their own sports equipment, clothing and towels that are cleaned and disinfected after each use. Sharing of equipment should be avoided. If equipment must be shared, clean and disinfect before and after each use.
- Discourage food and drink sharing. All players should have their own labeled water bottle.
- Discourage participants and attendees from singing, yelling, and chanting.
- As much as possible, all players should avoid touching their face.
- Players should arrive ready to participate to avoid using change rooms where possible.
- Do not allow spitting and encourage the use of tissues and other ways to prevent the spread of bodily fluids. Immediately throw away used tissues in garbage cans.
- Find other ways to celebrate or greet the other team. Avoid handshakes, high fives, and other unnecessary physical contact.

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## Facility and Equipment Sanitation

- Ventilation considerations:
  - Increase filtration efficiency to the highest level appropriate for the system.
  - Increase fresh air flow by opening windows and doors, and increase the percentage of outdoor air in HVAC air supply.
  - Limit the use of demand-controlled ventilation (keep system at optimal performance).
  - Explore the use of portable HEPA air filtration units where appropriate.
  - Always consult an HVAC professional before making changes to the ventilation system.
- Consider closing changing rooms and shower facilities. If this is not possible, stagger their use, and clean and disinfect frequently, ideally between each use. Wait at least 15 minutes after use before cleaning and disinfecting to allow droplets to settle.
- Develop procedures for use of the facility, keeping in mind cleaning and disinfecting for playing areas and other high touch surfaces and equipment between sports activities, physical distancing, hand hygiene, and other requirements.
- Provide training on cleaning and disinfecting procedures and adequate supplies and personal protective equipment.
- Develop a cleaning schedule. Record when cleaning has taken place, especially for high touch areas, surfaces and equipment.
- Frequently clean and disinfect other high touch surfaces throughout the recreation facility, including chairs, door handles, light switches, etc.
  - Use a household or commercial disinfectant to destroy or inactivate the virus.
  - Use a disinfectant with a drug identification number (DIN). This number means that it has been approved for use in Canada.
  - Read and follow manufacturer's instructions for the safe use of cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., wear gloves, use in well-ventilated area, allow enough contact time for disinfectant to kill germs based on the product being used).
  - If approved household or commercial disinfectant products are not available, hard surfaces can be disinfected using a mixture of 5 mL of bleach (5% sodium hypochlorite) and 250 mL of water. Test surfaces before using a bleach solution. Bleach can be corrosive. Follow instructions for safe handling of bleach.
  - If liquids can be withstood, disinfect high-touch electronic devices (touch screens, keyboards, tablets, smartboards) with alcohol wipes or disinfectant.
- Make sure washrooms are cleaned and disinfected frequently and stocked with soap and paper towels. If washrooms will not be available, inform people beforehand and provide enough hand sanitizer stations.
- Used cleaning cloths, towels, garments, etc., must be properly handled to prevent contamination, and laundered after every use. Use disposable single use items where possible.
- Contaminated disposable cleaning items (e.g., mop heads, cloths) should be placed in a lined garbage bin before disposing of them with regular waste.
- Reusable cleaning items can be washed using regular laundry soap and dried completely. Do not shake dirty laundry. Use disposable gloves and clean hands after handling laundry. Properly clean and disinfect laundry hampers and bins.
- Replace garbage bins with no-touch receptacles or remove lids that require contact to open. Garbage bins should also have a disposable liner.
- Dispose of garbage daily at minimum, and make sure it is done safely.
- Restrict access to areas where people do not need to go. Establish zones and clearly communicate to everyone the zones they can access. Mark off and restrict access to areas that only staff can use.

## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

PPE is a last line of defense when other preventative controls are not possible or do not offer enough protection.

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- When selecting the correct PPE to use, perform an assessment of all the activities that will be performed and products that will be used. Make sure appropriate protection is provided and additional hazards are not created. Involve any relevant organizations, individuals competent at completing risk assessments, workers that perform the task, and the health and safety committee or representative.
- Develop procedures and provide worker and volunteer training on the selection, use, wearing, removal, disposal, cleaning, maintenance, and storage of PPE.
- Perform hand hygiene before putting on PPE and after removing PPE.
- Do not share PPE.
- Anyone performing first aid should wear appropriate PPE, including a medical mask and gloves. Each team should have a first aid kit stocked with PPE. When appropriate, consider having a family member attend to the injured person.
- For certain sports, such as hockey, consider where a face shield can be used.

## General Recommendations

- Closely monitor information from your local public health authority. Follow their guidance and adjust health and safety measures accordingly.
- Sports organizations and recreational facilities should designate a main contact for reporting of any COVID-19 concern.
- In the event of an emergency, established emergency response procedures should still be followed. Communicate these procedures, and any changes to them.
- Contact lists should be available to organizers and workers in the event there are changes to scheduled activities, preventative measures, or other reasons requiring immediate communication.
- Continue to follow other required health and safety, sanitation, and infection control procedures.
- Consider accessibility to sports activities for those in low-income neighborhoods and persons with disabilities when developing control measures. Equitable access to recreation spaces is important for promoting health.
- Apply the hierarchy of controls when putting preventative actions in place, and continue to evaluate how effective they are.
- For additional information and guidance, refer to:
  - COVID-19 Return to High Performance Sport Framework by the National COVID-19 Return to High Performance Sport Task Force: <https://www.ownthepodium.org/en-CA/Resources/COVID-19-Resources>
  - Risk mitigation tool for outdoor recreation spaces and activities operating during the COVID-19 pandemic, from the Public Health Agency of Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/guidance-documents/risk-mitigation-tool-outdoor-recreation-spaces-activities-operating-covid-19.html>
- Canada's Recovery from the Impact of COVID-19: Role of the Parks and Recreation Sector, from the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association: <https://www.cpra.ca/covid19>

## Coping with Social Isolation, Microaggression or Stigma

- When helping others, encourage them to talk to someone trained in mental health first aid, or someone else they trust about what they are experiencing.
- If a worker, ask the individual to contact their supervisor, employer, or employee assistance service, if available.
- Contact your local public health or community resources that offer mental health services.
- Check out organizations online:
  - Canadian Mental Health Association <https://cmha.ca/news/covid-19-and-mental-health>
  - Canadian Psychological Association <https://cpa.ca/psychologyfactsheets/>
  - Kids Help Phone <https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/were-here-for-you-during-covid-19-novel-coronavirus/>



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**Provide mental health support to all workers, including access to an employee assistance program (EAP) if available.**



The Canadian Sport Helpline is available to help sport participants of all levels compete in a safe and welcoming environment. COVID-19 may increase the risk of mistreatment within the sport community. The helpline provides advice, guidance and resources on how to proceed: <https://abuse-free-sport.ca/en/>

If you or someone you know is in crisis, please contact to your local hospital, call 911 immediately, or contact a Crisis Centre in your area:

<https://suicideprevention.ca/need-help/>

For further information on COVID-19, refer to the Public Health Agency of Canada:

<https://www.canada.ca/coronavirus>

Note that this guidance is just some of the adjustments that organizations can make during a pandemic. Adapt this list by adding your own good practices and policies to meet your organization's specific needs.