

COVID-19 Sports Guidance for Youth and Adults

This guidance document outlines prevention strategies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 during sports activities. This document is intended for participants all ages, in sports activities organized by entities, associations, clubs, or organizations providing for registration of participants and oversight on a regular basis for a defined period of time.

As required by Executive Orders issued by Governor Tim Walz under the Peacetime Emergency, businesses in this sector must develop and implement COVID-19 Preparedness Plans that address the hazards of COVID-19 transmission at the worksites.

- All businesses (sports facilities, gyms, associations, sports clubs/teams, etc.) are required to develop a program-specific plan. Templates for developing a program-specific plan can be found at [Stay Safe MN website \(staysafe.mn.gov\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov).
- All youth sports programs must also follow the parameters outlined in the following guidance: [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/socialdistance.pdf).
 - “Youth programs” mean programs providing care or enrichment to children or adolescents such as day camps, summer activities, and recreational or educational classes that require registration and have on-site supervision. “Youth programs” does not include licensed child care facilities or school-district summer learning programs.

An organization’s COVID-19 Preparedness Plans must address the requirements listed below as well as consider the outlined recommendations listed in this document.

Important Risk Considerations

Level of Contact in a Sport

Before starting games for any sport, consider the risk associated with that sport in terms of COVID-19 being spread between players.

- The more physical or close contact that occurs the greater risk there is in spreading illness.
- Resources for Risk Categorization of Sports.
 - [National Collegiate Athletic Association \(www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/coronavirus-covid-19\)](https://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/coronavirus-covid-19)

- [United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee Coronavirus Updates \(https://www.teamusa.org/Coronavirus\)](https://www.teamusa.org/Coronavirus)
Under the “Return to Training and Sport Event Planning” tab, select the Sport Event Planning.
- National Federation of State High School Association’s [Guidance for Opening up High School Athletics and Activities \(https://nfhs.org/media/3812287/2020-nfhs-guidance-for-opening-up-high-school-athletics-and-activities-nfhs-smac-may-15_2020-final.pdf\)](https://nfhs.org/media/3812287/2020-nfhs-guidance-for-opening-up-high-school-athletics-and-activities-nfhs-smac-may-15_2020-final.pdf)

Know Before you Play

There may be an increased risk of COVID-19 when participating in a game or tournament, and COVID-19 activity may be different in different regions of the state, also contributing to a possible increase in risk.

Traveling out of state to participate in sports activities is strongly discouraged. However, if teams are considering traveling to other regions or states for games, they should be aware of COVID-19 activity to inform their decision. See:

- For Minnesota:
 - [MDH Situation Update for COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/situation.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/situation.html),
 - [Governor’s COVID-19 Dashboard \(mn.gov/covid19\)](http://mn.gov/covid19)
- For the broader United States:
 - [Johns Hopkins University of Medicine COVID-19 United States Cases by County \(coronavirus.jhu.edu/us-map\)](https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/us-map)
 - [Center’s Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Cases in the U.S. \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html).

Requirements for holding games, scrimmages, and practices

- ✓ Capacity requirements.
 - For youth and adult organized sports, pod sizes for non-game activities (training, practicing) cannot exceed 25 people per pod, either inside and outside. Pod count is composed of players and coaches.
 - Games (played indoors or outdoors) can have the total number of players, coaches, referees, umpires, etc. as needed to hold the game just as long as the total number of people is not exceeding the total number allowed by the venue or facility (check capacity limits).
- ✓ Create protocols that minimize crowding at practices.
 - Friends and family should not attend practices to avoid crowding.

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- If necessary for spectators to be at practices, ensure that six foot social distancing between households is being adhered to and venue/facility guidance is being followed.
- ✓ Games, scrimmages, or practices in an outdoor public area are subject to the social gathering limit. The current social gathering size limit in outdoor public settings is 25, and applies to activities not being held in a facility or other type of venue. This capacity of 25 includes players, coaches, spectators, etc.
- ✓ Select an appropriate venue for your competition.
 - Consider the size of the team(s) (including players and staff) and whether the limited capacity of the venue (indoor or outdoor) is able to accommodate the team(s)
 - Check the capacity restrictions with the venue
 - Facility and venue guidance is available at [Minnesota Stay Safe Guidance \(https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp). Including:
 - [Operational Guidance for Outdoor Recreational Activities \(https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/outdoor-recreation.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/outdoor-recreation.jsp)
 - [Guidance for Entertainment Facilities \(https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/entertainment.jsp)
 - [Recreational Entertainment Venues \(https://mn.gov/deed/assets/recreational-entertainment-industry-guidance-acc_tcm1045-434886.pdf\)](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/recreational-entertainment-industry-guidance-acc_tcm1045-434886.pdf)
 - A visual guide to capacity limits can be found here: [Minnesota's Stay Safe Plan \(https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/stay-safe-mn/stay-safe-plan.jsp\)](https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/stay-safe-mn/stay-safe-plan.jsp).
- ✓ Adhere to social distancing requirements.
 - Maintain 6 feet between participants when they are not playing (on the bench, in the dugout, on the sideline, etc.).
 - Maintain social distancing of 6 feet from other households during drop off/pick up of players.
- ✓ Follow face covering requirements.
 - As of July 25, 2020, per the Governor's Executive Order, people in Minnesota will be required to wear a face covering in all public indoor spaces and indoor businesses.
 - This Executive Order includes exemptions for people who are unable to wear or tolerate a face covering due to medical or other reasons. There are also situations in which a face covering may be temporarily removed or where face coverings are not required. For example, a person may temporarily remove their face covering when participating as an athlete in an organized sport in an indoor business or public indoor space while the level of exertion makes it difficult to wear a face covering.
 - Face coverings are strongly encouraged, but not required, when participating as an athlete in an indoor or outdoor organized sport, to the extent possible when social distancing is not being maintained.

More information about face covering requirements and exemptions is available on the MDH website at [Masks and face coverings](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html#masks) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/prevention.html#masks>).

- Additional information is also provided at these web pages: [Face Covering Requirements and Recommendations under Executive Order 20-81](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecover.html>) and [Frequently Asked Questions About the Requirement to Wear Face Coverings](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecoverfaq.html) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/facecoverfaq.html>).
- ✓ Create protocols to maintain health checks and screening of participants and staff/volunteers.
 - Any staff, volunteers, or participants who are sick must stay home.
 - Have policies in place outlining the process for those who become sick while participating in a sport.
 - Be aware that persons can get a positive COVID-19 test even if they do not have symptoms.
- ✓ Identify a plan administrator for your organization's COVID-19 plan.
 - Communicate your COVID-19 plan with to officials, umpires, and trainers.
 - This should include expectations around screening, face coverings, and other prevention efforts.
 - Plan templates are available at [Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp) (<https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp>).
- ✓ Create protocols that are considerate of coaches, staff, players, volunteers, and participants at highest risk of complications from COVID-19.
 - [People Who Are at Increased Risk for Severe Illness](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html) (www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html)
 - [Executive Order 20-55, Protecting the Rights and Health of At Risk Populations during the COVID-19 Peacetime Emergency \(PDF\)](https://www.leg.state.mn.us/archive/execorders/20-55.pdf) (www.leg.state.mn.us/archive/execorders/20-55.pdf)

Recommendations for returning to play

- ✓ While this guidance is directed at resuming games, scrimmages, and practices, MDH recommends a phased approach for returning to games. For example, consider the following for implementing a phased approach: MDH recommends the following strategy and example as a way to phase into competition:
 - Begin with intra-team scrimmages as part of practice.
 - Two weeks later, focus on playing teams in your local community, local club, or local organization.
 - After another two weeks, consider expanding to teams beyond your local community, but consider COVID-19 case activity level and risk in those communities when making travel decisions.

- ✓ Before returning to play, refer to your national sports association or conference guidance on how to return to play, or general national and state guidance on how to re-open sports safely. See links to various associations listed in the sport-specific resources for return to play section' at the end of this document.
- ✓ Consider whether contact in the sport can be modified. For example, can contact be reduced among players during practice, and even during games in order to limit close contact?
- ✓ Consider whether practices/games can occur outside, as in general, being outside reduces the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
- ✓ Minimize sharing of objects.
 - Do not share individual water bottles, community snacks, or towels.
 - Encourage use of dedicated personal equipment such as bats, mitts, rackets, etc.

If a member of your team or organization has COVID-19

- ✓ If a case of COVID-19 is reported to you, notify MDH by email at health.sports.covid19@state.mn.us. MDH will be available to answer any questions you have and can provide guidance. MDH also has template notification letters for close contacts or others on the team who may have questions about their risk of COVID-19.
- ✓ MDH/LPH will interview the case or parent/guardian, determine the dates when the case was infectious, identify anyone that may have been exposed, and collect contact information for those individuals.
 - People identified as exposed (close contacts) are those who spent at least 15 minutes within 6 feet of the case while the case was infectious (the infectious period starts 2 days before symptom onset, or 2 days before the case was tested, if they had no symptoms).
 - Exposed persons (close contacts) will need to quarantine for 14 days from the last contact with the COVID-19 case.
 - If necessary, MDH may contact your organization for information on close contacts.
 - It is important to keep rosters of who was at practices and games each day so we can do contact tracing quickly. For more information on how we do contact tracing, see [Tracing COVID-19 \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/tracing.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/tracing.html).
 - You can find more information on what contacts need to do at [What To Do if You Have Had Close Contact With a Person With COVID-19 \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/contact.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/contact.pdf).
 - Individuals who are sick with COVID-19 will need to stay out for a period of time. You can find most up to date information on these recommendations at [If You Are Sick \(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html).
- ✓ In general, you do not need to cancel practice or games once you hear of a case. If such steps are needed, MDH/LPH will reach out to you and work with you to determine next steps.

- ✓ If you know you have a case but haven't heard from MDH or LPH and you still have concerns or need notification resources, please email us at health.sports.covid19@state.mn.us.

Plans for modifying play

Be prepared to have plans in place to modify your play should there be:

- A cluster of infections occur on your team, causing you not to have enough players to continue practices and games.
- Changes to public health official guidelines regarding group gatherings or sports activities.

Guidance development

- This document was developed in collaboration with stakeholders in Minnesota – in particular, the Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission and the Higher Education Athletic Task Force.
- The Minnesota Department of Education continues to partner with the Minnesota State High School League in providing guidance to member schools regarding participation in athletics and activities. School-based activities and athletics are important to our students' educational experience and more specific guidance will be provided in alignment with the three educational scenarios described in the [2020-2021 Planning Guide for Schools: Health Considerations for Navigating COVID-19 \(PDF\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/k12planguide.pdf) (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/k12planguide.pdf). This document provides parameters for schools to use in their planning for possible reopening in fall 2020-2021.

Future guidance

- We will continue to monitor the trends of COVID-19 and continue to dial up or dial back as needed.
- MDH will pay close attention to transmission trends in sports and refine guidance and response recommendations as needed to help prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Sport-specific resources for return to play

Note MDH is not promoting any resources but is including links here for your reference.

- CDC guidance has considerations for youth sports. These principles can be applied to all ages: [Considerations for Youth Sports \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html)
- Strategies provided by the [National Collegiate Athletics Association: Core Principles of Resocialization of Collegiate Sport \(www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/core-principles-resocialization-collegiate-sport\)](http://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/core-principles-resocialization-collegiate-sport)
- Guidance and support at the [Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission \(www.mnsports.org/\)](http://www.mnsports.org/)

- [USA Wrestling COVID-19 Update \(www.teamusa.org/USA-Wrestling/Features/2020/March/14/COVID-19-Special-Section\)](http://www.teamusa.org/USA-Wrestling/Features/2020/March/14/COVID-19-Special-Section)
- [USA Wrestling's Return to the Mat Guidelines \(PDF\) \(content.themat.com/covid-19/USAW-Return-to-the-Mat-Guidelines.pdf\)](http://content.themat.com/covid-19/USAW-Return-to-the-Mat-Guidelines.pdf) [USA Hockey Player Safety & Health \(www.usahockey.com/playersafety\)](http://www.usahockey.com/playersafety)
- [Minnesota Ice Arena Managers Association COVID-19 Reference Page \(miami.org/members/covid-19-reference-page/\)](http://miami.org/members/covid-19-reference-page/)
- [US Lacrosse: Return-to-Play Recommendations for Lacrosse \(PDF\) \(www.uslacrosse.org/sites/default/files/public/documents/safety/return-to-play-final-1.pdf\)](http://www.uslacrosse.org/sites/default/files/public/documents/safety/return-to-play-final-1.pdf)
- [USATF Coronavirus 2019 \(COVID-19\) Information Page \(www.usatf.org/covid19\)](http://www.usatf.org/covid19)
- [USA Volleyball Return to Play Guidelines \(www.teamusa.org/usa-volleyball/features/-/media/A455B89BE0094BDC96EFEC89BFD324D6.ashx\)](http://www.teamusa.org/usa-volleyball/features/-/media/A455B89BE0094BDC96EFEC89BFD324D6.ashx)
- [USA Ultimate Return to Play Guidance \(PDF\) \(www.usultimate.org/assets/1/Page/ReturnToPlayGuidance-June2020.pdf\)](http://www.usultimate.org/assets/1/Page/ReturnToPlayGuidance-June2020.pdf)
- [USA Swimming Coronavirus Resources \(www.usaswimming.org/utility/landing-pages/coronavirus\)](http://www.usaswimming.org/utility/landing-pages/coronavirus)
- [USTA Tennis Playing Tennis Safely \(www.usta.com/en/home/stay-current/national/usta-statement-on-safety-of-playing-tennis-during-the-covid-19-v.html\)](http://www.usta.com/en/home/stay-current/national/usta-statement-on-safety-of-playing-tennis-during-the-covid-19-v.html)
- [USA Soccer Recommendations Guides \(www.ussoccer.com/playon/guides/phase-1-grassroots\)](http://www.ussoccer.com/playon/guides/phase-1-grassroots)
- [USGA Guidance in Applying Golf's Rules and Posting Scores \(www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rulesarticles/covid-19-rules-and-handicapping-faqs.html\)](http://www.usga.org/content/usga/home-page/rules-hub/rulesarticles/covid-19-rules-and-handicapping-faqs.html)
- [Minnesota Softball COVID-19 Guidelines/Resources Page \(https://fastpitch.mnsoftball.com/covid19\)](https://fastpitch.mnsoftball.com/covid19)



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