

# Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

CDC > Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) > Communities, Schools & Workplaces > Parks & Recreational Facilities



- Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)
- Symptoms & Testing +
- Prevent Getting Sick +
- Daily Life & Coping +
- If You Are Sick +
- People Who Need Extra Precautions +
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Travel +
- Cases, Data, & Surveillance +
- Communities, Schools & Workplaces -**
- Critical Workers
- Disinfecting Your Facility
- Disinfect Your Non-Emergency Vehicle
- Schools & Child Care +
- Colleges & Universities +
- Businesses +
- Gatherings & Community Events +
- First Responders and Law Enforcement +
- Community- and Faith-Based Organizations +
- Parks & Recreational Facilities -**
- Guidance for Park Administrators**
- Homeless Population +
- Retirement Communities +
- Correctional and Detention Facilities +
- Environmental Health Practitioners
- Tribal Communities +
- Healthcare Professionals +
- Health Departments +
- Laboratories +
- Communication Resources +

## Guidance for Administrators in Parks and Recreational Facilities

Other Languages ▾

Parks, trails, and open spaces can provide opportunities for physical activity while also providing opportunities for respite, health, and wellness. Individuals are encouraged to use parks, trails, and open spaces safely as they are able while following current guidance to [prevent the spread of COVID-19](#).

The following offers guidance for the use and administration of local, state, and national parks.

### Post information to promote everyday preventive actions.

Park administrators should consider displaying posters and [signs](#) throughout the park to frequently remind visitors to take steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19. These messages may include information about:

- Staying home if you are sick or do not feel well, and what to do if you're sick or feel ill.
- Using social distancing and maintaining at least six feet between individuals in all areas of the park.
- Covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue, then throwing the tissue in the trash.
- Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- Using hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

### Maintain restrooms. Ensure they have functional toilets, clean and disinfected surfaces, and handwashing supplies.

Restrooms should remain open if a park remains open for public visitation. Ensure that restrooms are:

- **Operational with functional toilets.**
- **Cleaned and disinfected regularly**, particularly high-touch surfaces such as faucets, toilets, doorknobs, and light switches. Clean restrooms daily or more often if possible. The EPA-registered household disinfectants listed [here](#) are recommended.
- **Regularly stocked with supplies for handwashing**, including soap and materials for drying hands.

Oftentimes restroom facilities without running water, such as portable toilets and vault toilets, are cleaned less frequently, and they sometimes are not stocked with hand hygiene products. Encourage visitors to bring their own hand sanitizer for use in these facilities.

### Keep swimming pools properly cleaned and disinfected.

Proper operation, maintenance, and disinfection (with chlorine or bromine) of swimming pools should kill the virus that causes COVID-19.

- Maintain proper disinfectant levels (1–10 parts per million free chlorine or 3–8 ppm bromine) and pH (7.2–8).
- CDC's [Model Aquatic Health Code](#) has more recommendations to prevent illness and injuries at public pools in parks.

### Be prepared to cancel or postpone large events and gatherings.

- Monitor and adhere to guidelines issued at the national, state, and local levels related to [limiting the size of gatherings](#).
- Continually assess current conditions and engage with the National Park Service, state, and local [public health officials](#) when deciding whether to postpone, cancel, or significantly reduce the number of attendees (if possible) for mass gatherings.
- Consider [CDC guidance](#) and [White House guidance](#) as you make decisions about whether to proceed with, postpone, or cancel an event.

### Make sure people are social distancing in popular areas of the park.

During periods of sustained community transmission, park administrators should:

- Monitor areas where people are likely to gather and consider temporary closure to support social distancing practices. These areas might include sports fields, playgrounds, skateparks, basketball courts, tennis courts, and picnic areas. In the event of facility closures, park administrators might want to place physical barriers in these areas and post [signs](#) communicating that the area is closed.
- Post [signs](#) discouraging groups from gathering in larger numbers than are currently recommended or allowed.

If organized sports activity has been suspended within the park, communicate with sports team coaches that unofficial sports practices are also prohibited within the park.

### Postpone or cancel organized activities and sports.

In general, most organized activities and sports such as basketball, baseball, soccer, and football that are held on park fields, open areas, and courts are not recommended during times in which individuals are encouraged or required to practice social distancing. These activities and sports typically require coaches and athletes who are not from the same household or living unit to be in close proximity, which increases their potential for exposure to COVID-19.

Park administrators should monitor directives issued at the national, state, and local levels related to limiting the size of [gatherings](#). These directives can inform decisions about limiting participation for those sports and activities that exceed the maximum number allowed. Until local [public health officials](#) have coordinated with organizers to determine if/when it is safe to participate in such activities, all should be postponed or canceled.

### Use flexible sick-leave and telework policies, especially for staff at higher risk for severe illness.

- Be as flexible as possible with staff attendance and sick-leave policies.
- Remind staff to stay at home if they are sick.
- Identify staff whose duties would allow them to work from home and encourage teleworking when possible.
- Consider offering revised duties to staff who are at [higher risk of severe illness with COVID-19](#).

### Keep your park staff informed about COVID-19 and preventive actions.

When there is ongoing transmission of COVID-19 in the community where the park is located, consider implementing the following strategies:

- Provide staff with [up-to-date information about COVID-19](#) and park policies on a regular basis.
- Communicate to park staff the importance of practicing healthy hygiene habits such as [washing hands often, covering coughs and sneezes](#), and [social distancing](#) to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- If staff develop a fever, cough, or shortness of breath while at work, have them immediately put on a face mask (if available), isolate them, and have them return home from the park as soon as possible, and ask them to follow [CDC-recommended steps for persons who are ill with COVID-19 symptoms](#).
- If a staff member has a confirmed COVID-19 infection, inform other staff about their possible exposure to the virus, while maintaining confidentiality as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act; see [Public Health Recommendations for People in U.S. Communities Exposed to a Person with Known or Suspected COVID-19, other than Health Workers or other Critical Infrastructure Workers](#).

### Review CDC's guidance for businesses and employers.

- Review CDC's [guidance for businesses and employers](#) to identify additional strategies to protect park staff during an outbreak of COVID-19.
- For additional questions or guidance, contact your state or local health department public health officials and in the case of the National Park Service, contact [public health officials](#) in the Office of Public Health.

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Content source: National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases (NCIRD), Division of Viral Diseases

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