



Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Youth Sports Program FAQs

Are some sports safer than others?

Sports that require close interaction, are played indoors, and share equipment may pose a greater risk for COVID-19 infection or transmission. The virus spreads mainly [from person-to-person](#) among other ways. The more people a player or coach interacts with, the closer the physical interaction, the more sharing of equipment there is by multiple players, and the longer the interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread.

To determine which sports are safer to play during the COVID-19 pandemic, consider the following:

- Physical closeness of players during play
- Amount of necessary touching of shared equipment and gear
- Ability to engage in social distancing while not actively engaged in play such as when on the bench or sideline
- Age of the player and their ability to comply with social distancing and other protective actions
- Size of the team and field of play
- Presence of nonessential visitors, spectators, volunteers during practices or games
- Travel required outside of the local community

Sports that require frequent closeness or contact between players may make it more difficult to maintain social distancing and therefore may present increased risk for COVID-19 spread. For close-contact sports like wrestling or basketball, play may be modified to safely increase distance between players.

- For example:
 - Coaches and players can focus on individual skill building or conditioning instead of competition;
 - Coaches can limit close or full contact (such as tackling, checking or guarding) to competitions or game-like situations (such as scrimmages) or limit the number of participants involved in close or full contact situations;
 - Leagues can decrease the number of competitions during a season.

For sports that are normally played indoors such as hockey and gymnastics, coaches can focus on individual skill building or conditioning in lieu of team-based practice, limit the number of players or athletes in the facility at one time so they can space out by at least 6 feet, or conduct modified practices outdoors.

Do we need to clean and disinfect surfaces and equipment in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19? If so, how do we do that?

Yes. Routinely cleaning and disinfecting equipment and frequently touched surfaces is important to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Even though getting COVID-19 by touching an object that has the virus on it and then touching your mouth, nose, or possibly your eyes is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads, we are still learning more about this virus.

Therefore, CDC recommends that you clean and disinfect equipment and frequently touched surfaces on or around the field, court, or play surface such as drinking fountains at least daily, or between uses as much as possible. Shared objects and equipment such as balls, bats, gymnastics equipment, and protective gear should be cleaned and disinfected between use by different individuals if possible. For more information, refer to the [Considerations for Youth Sports](#). Additionally, CDC recommends the use of disinfectants on the [Environmental Protection Agency's List N](#) [\[link\]](#), which includes about 400 disinfectants that are effective against the virus that causes COVID-19.

Another effective way to decrease the risk of COVID-19 spread is to discourage the sharing of items that are difficult to clean or disinfect. One way to do this is to be sure that you have adequate supplies to minimize sharing of equipment (such as protective gear, balls, bats, water bottles). If it is not possible to have dedicated equipment for each player, limit use of supplies and equipment to one smaller group of players at a time and clean and disinfect those supplies and equipment between use.

Do you recommend that players wear cloth face coverings during play?

The youth sports program should determine if cloth face coverings should be worn by players after considering local conditions and checking state, local, territorial, or tribal health and safety laws, rules, and regulations with which youth sports organizations must comply. While playing sports, wearing cloth face coverings may be challenging for players, particularly for younger players and youth with disabilities and underlying medical conditions. Cloth face coverings should be worn by coaches, youth sports staff, officials, parents, and spectators as much as possible.

Cloth face coverings are most important when physical distancing is difficult. Therefore, encourage social distancing as much as possible. People wearing face coverings should be reminded to not touch their face covering and to wash their hands frequently. Information should be provided to all participants on the proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings. Cloth face coverings should **not** be placed on:

- Babies and children younger than 2 years old;
- Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious;
- Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance.

If a program determines that players should wear [cloth face coverings](#), it may be helpful to experiment with several different kinds in order to ensure comfort and fit.

Does CDC have recommendations on how to keep 6 feet between players during practice or games? —

CDC does encourage social distancing in youth sports programs, if feasible. There are several strategies for this. For instance, programs can:

- Encourage players to wait in their cars with guardians as feasible until just before the beginning of a practice, warm-up, or game, instead of forming a group. Never leave children in a parked car and follow [CDC's Tips for Preventing Heat-Related Illness](#) to keep children safe. Increase the size of the practice field or court
- Create physical distance between players when explaining drills or the rules of the game.
- Provide physical guides, such as signs, paint and tape on floors or playing fields.
- Space players at least 6 feet apart on the field, when possible, while participating in the sport (such as during warmup, skill building activities and simulation drills).
- If keeping physical distance is difficult with players in competition or group practice, consider relying on individual skill work and drills.
- Discourage unnecessary physical contact, such as high fives, handshakes, fist bumps, or hugs.

Older youth might be better able to follow directions for social distancing, while younger players may need reminders. Youth sports programs may ask parents or other household members to monitor their children and make sure that they remain at least 6 feet away from others outside their household and take other protective actions (for example, younger children could sit with parents or caregivers instead of in a dugout or group area).

You can also institute strategies during gameplay that may reduce contact between players. For example, consider banning defensive walls in soccer during free kicks, work with the opposing team to substitute cohorts together to ensure that the same players are on the field at the same time, or limit the number of scrums in rugby.

For a full list of strategies, refer to CDC's [Considerations for Youth Sports](#).

How would social distancing apply to trainers? What about coaches spotting gymnasts? —

Trainers and coaches should stay at least 6 feet away from players and others when possible. Sports that require frequent closeness between players, trainers, or coaches pose a higher risk for spreading COVID-19. To lower this risk, trainers should limit close contact and encourage the athlete to focus on individual skill building and conditioning from a distance of at least 6 feet. If close contact is required (such as for spotting), programs are encouraged to assign each coach and trainer a small group of athletes. This group of athletes should stay with the same coach and trainer throughout the season and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Coaches and trainers should wear a cloth face covering when interacting with the athletes.

How can sports programs prevent COVID-19 spreading among families and friends who gather in groups to watch sporting events? What about the athletes who are waiting to play?

Youth sports leagues and teams should communicate with players and families about the importance of social distancing, wearing cloth face coverings, and other protective measures they can take before they attend group events, such as games, competitions, or social gatherings. Youth sports organizations should also limit any non-essential visitors, spectators, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations as much as possible – especially with individuals not from the local geographic area (e.g., community, town, city, or county).

During times when players are not actively participating in practice or competition, encourage social distancing by increasing space between players on the sideline, dugout, or bench. Consider posting signs or visual cues on the ground or walls to indicate appropriate spacing distance. Additionally, coaches can encourage athletes to use downtime for individual skill-building work or cardiovascular conditioning, rather than staying clustered together.

Is it feasible to run large sports camps or tournaments this summer?

Consult with your state and local health officials to discuss the particular situation in your community. In general, the more people a young person interacts with, the closer the interaction, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. There are several actions that sports camp administrators can take to reduce this risk. They can prioritize outdoor instead of indoor activities [if safe conditions allow](#). Coaches could focus on individual skill-building drills that allow for social distancing. Also, coaches can put athletes into small groups that remain together and work through stations, rather than switching groups or mixing groups.

There is also less risk if all athletes are from the local geographic area. Tournament directors may consider limiting the number of teams participating at one time or perhaps cohorting teams from the same local geographic area together.

They may also encourage teams and spectators to engage in health protective behaviors as much as possible, including handwashing, social distancing, and wearing cloth face coverings. In addition, CDC has developed resources including a [Youth Camps Decision Tool](#) and [Youth and Summer Camps Considerations](#).

How should we deal with officials and coaches who may be older and at higher risk for getting seriously ill from COVID-19?

A person's risk of getting severely ill from COVID-19 increases with age, and people of any age with underlying medical conditions are also at higher risk. In many sports, it may be possible for coaches and officials to stay at least 6 feet away from players by modifying their normal routine. Coaches and officials who cannot physically distance 6 feet from players should wear face coverings to protect other people in case you are infected. CDC currently recommends the use of face coverings for those who are not able to physically distance at least 6 feet apart.

You can also offer options for individuals at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (such as virtual coaching and in-home drills) that limit their risk of getting infected. You could also limit youth sports participation to staff and youth who live in the local geographic area (e.g., community, city, town, or county) to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading from areas with higher levels of illness.

Should sports programs screen or test all athletes before they come to practice or a game?

If feasible, conduct daily health checks ([symptom checking](#)) of coaches, officials, staff, and players safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy and confidentiality laws and regulations. Youth sports program administrators may use examples of screening methods found in CDC's supplemental [Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open](#) as a guide for screening children, and CDC's [General Business FAQs](#) for screening staff.

What should we do if one of our players or athletes gets COVID-19?

First, make sure that coaches, staff, officials, players, and families know that sick individuals should not attend the youth sports activity, and that they should notify youth sports program administrators (such as the COVID-19 point of contact for your program) if they or someone in their household become sick with COVID-19 symptoms, test positive for COVID-19, or have been exposed to someone suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19.

Second, close off areas used by a sick person within the last 24 hours and do not use these areas until after cleaning and disinfecting them. For outdoor areas, this includes surfaces or shared objects in the area, if applicable.

Third, in accordance with state and local laws and regulations, youth sports organizations should notify local health officials, youth sports program staff, umpires/officials, and families immediately of anyone with COVID-19 while maintaining that person's confidentiality in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Finally, if any coaches, staff members, umpires/officials, or players get sick, they should not return until they have met CDC's [criteria to discontinue home isolation](#). For more information, refer to the *Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick* section in the [Considerations for Youth Sports](#).

If a player on a team tests positive for COVID-19, does the entire team (if they had been in close contact with that athlete) have to quarantine for 14 days, as the CDC recommends —

Yes. Consult with local health officials if you determine your team or coaches have been exposed to COVID-19. Individuals who recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 should follow [CDC's guidance for when you can be around others](#).

How many athletes should be allowed in a gym, weight room, or on a field at one time? How many spectators should attend a game? —

CDC does not have a limit or specific number for these scenarios. Each sports administrator or program will need to determine the appropriate number for their setting in collaboration with local health officials. In general, the number that is chosen should allow individuals to remain at least 6 feet apart from each other. Rather than focusing on an ideal number, emphasis should be placed on the ability to reduce and limit contact between players, spectators, and others. For additional tips, CDC has developed resources for [events and gatherings](#).

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