

COVID-19

CASES ARE RISING.
ACT NOW!



Sports Program FAQs

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Are some sports safer than others?

The virus spreads mainly [from person to person](#) via droplets.

Sports that require frequent closeness or contact between players may make it more difficult to maintain physical distancing and therefore may present increased risk for COVID-19 spread. For close-contact sports like basketball or football, 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. COVID-19 is thought to be mostly spread by respiratory droplets released when people talk, cough, or sneeze. It is possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

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 before and after use. For more information on cleaning and disinfection for sports teams, refer to the [Considerations for Youth Sports](#). Additionally, CDC recommends the use of disinfectants on the [Environmental Protection Agency's List N](#) [↗](#), which includes about 400 disinfectants that are effective against the virus that causes COVID-19.

Another way to slow the spread of COVID-19 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 before and after use.

Do you recommend that players wear masks during play? 

Yes. Masks covering their mouths and noses should be encouraged as much as possible. While playing high intensity sports, wearing masks may be challenging for players, particularly for younger players and individuals with disabilities and underlying medical conditions. Masks should be worn by coaches, sports staff, officials, parents, and spectators. If a player's mask gets wet, it should be changed for a clean and dry one as a wet mask be difficult to breathe through. It is important that players bring extra masks in case theirs needs to be changed out. CDC recognizes there are specific instances when wearing a mask may not be feasible. In these instances, consider [adaptations and alternatives](#).


Masks are most important when physical distancing is difficult. Therefore, encourage physical distancing as much as possible with [some exceptions](#).

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


CDC does encourage physical distancing in sports programs. There are several strategies for this. For instance, programs can:

- Encourage players to wait in their cars until just before the beginning of a practice, warm-up, or game, instead of forming a group. Never leave children unattended in a parked car and follow [CDC's Tips for Preventing Heat-Related Illness](#) to keep children safe.
- Minimize locker room use by changing into workout clothes or team uniforms before arriving and deferring showering until players return home.
- Increase the size of the practice field or court.
- Provide physical distancing guides, such as signs, paint and tape on floors or playing fields.
- Space players at least 6 feet apart on the field as much as possible, for example, during warmup, explaining rules, 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.
- 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.
- Discourage unnecessary physical contact, such as high fives, handshakes, fist bumps, or hugs.
- If the space is shared with other teams or groups, stagger practices and games so there is no overlap in the locker room, bleachers, etc.

For children, older youth might be better able to follow directions for physical 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).


How would physical 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 mask that covers their mouth and nose. Athletes should wear a mask as well, as much as possible.

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? 

Sports leagues and teams should communicate with players and families about the importance of physical distancing, wearing masks, and other protective measures they can take before they attend group events, such as games, competitions, or social gatherings. 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 physical 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? 

It's important to note that safely hosting a large event in areas where there

It's important to note that safely hosting a large event in areas where there are high levels of COVID-19 within the community will be challenging. Consult with your state and local health officials to discuss the particular situation in your community before considering holding such a gathering and make sure you are following limits on gathering sizes. In general, the more people a person interacts with, the closer the interaction, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. While not recommended, there are several actions that sports camp administrators can take that may 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 physical distancing. Also, coaches can put athletes into small groups that remain together and work through stations, rather than switching groups or mixing groups. They can also encourage teams and spectators to engage in health protective behaviors as much as possible, including handwashing, physical distancing, and wearing masks.

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. If the camp or tournament is taking place indoors, ensure ventilation systems operate properly. If feasible, adjust system when sports are played to increase outdoor air exchange. Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling or triggering asthma symptoms) to players or others using the facility. If portable ventilation equipment like fans are used, take steps to minimize air blowing from one person directly at another person to reduce the potential spread of any airborne or aerosolized viruses. Fans should be used to push air outside, not across the room.

Staffing or attending large sporting camps or tournaments may increase your risk of getting and spreading COVID-19. Postponing large sport camps or tournaments is the best way to protect yourself and others from COVID-19. If you do decide to hold or participate in a large sports camp or tournament, you should plan to take preventive actions afterwards).

After a Large Event or Sports Camp


You may have been exposed to COVID-19 during the event or sports camps. You may feel well and not have any symptoms, but you can still spread the virus to others. **You and other participants may pose a risk to your family, friends, and community after the event.**

- Consider getting tested with a [viral test](#) 3–5 days after your sports camp or event and reduce [non-essential activities](#) for a full 7 days after the event or sports camp, even if your test is negative. If you don't get tested, consider reducing non-essential activities for 10 days.
- **If your test is positive**, [isolate](#) yourself to protect others from getting infected.

Also take these actions for 14 days after you return from your sports camp or event to protect others from getting COVID-19:

- [Stay at least 6 feet/2 meters](#) (about 2 arm lengths) from anyone who was not at the sports camp or event with you, particularly in crowded areas. It's important to do this everywhere — both indoors and outdoors.
- Wear a [mask](#) to keep your nose and mouth covered when you are in shared spaces outside of your home, including when using [public transportation](#).
- If there are people in the household who did not attend the sports camp or event with you, [wear a mask](#) and ask everyone in the household to wear masks in shared spaces inside your home.
- [Wash your hands](#) often or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid being around people who are at [increased risk for severe illness](#).
- Watch your health: Look for [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, and take your temperature if you feel sick.

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, especially those who cannot physically distance 6 feet from players, should wear masks that cover the mouth and nose to protect other people and themselves.

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 sports participation to staff and players 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.

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 sports activity, and that they should notify 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, maintain careful rosters of which players, family members, coaches, and ancillary staff attend each practice and game, and have current contact information for everyone. If a COVID-19 exposure occurs, timely notifications are critical, and this information will help contact tracing activities occur more smoothly.

Third, 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.


Fourth, in accordance with state and local laws and regulations, sports organizations should notify local health officials immediately of anyone with COVID-19.

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, particularly for those involved in youth athletics, 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? 

Maybe. It is important to consult with your local health officials to determine if your team or coaches are considered [close contacts](#) of the player who tested positive for 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](#).

The best way to protect yourself and others is to [stay home for 14 days if you think you've been exposed to someone who has COVID-19](#). Check your [local health department's website](#) for information about options in your area to possibly shorten this quarantine period.

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 not from the same household 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](#)