

# COVID-19 Sports Guidance for Youth and Adults

This guidance document outlines the practical application of prevention strategies to reduce the spread of COVID-19 among sports activities. This document is meant to support sports of all ages, which are any sports activity where participants are organized by entities, associations, clubs, or organizations providing for registration of participants and oversight on a regular basis for a defined period of time.

Requirements and recommendations for your required COVID-19 plan are outlined below.

All businesses (sports facilities, gyms, associations, clubs, etc.) are required to develop a program-specific plan. Templates for developing a program-specific plan can be found at:

- [Stay Safe MN: Stay Safe Guidance for All Business Entities \(staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp)

All youth sports activities 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” do not include licensed child care facilities or school-district summer learning programs.

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) strongly recommends the following timelines for all ages:

- Games/scrimmages – both within teams and between teams:
  - June 24 or later for outdoor sports
  - July 1 or later for indoor sports
- Full team practices for all sports
  - June 24 for indoor and outdoor sports

For organized sports of all ages, pod sizes for non-game settings are required to not exceed 25 people per pod, both inside and outside.

- Intermixing between pods should still be kept to a minimum.
- Having pods reduces the number of people potentially exposed if you have a case of COVID-19 and also makes it easier to quickly identify close contacts.

Even though epidemiological indicators show that COVID-19 is slowing in Minnesota, it is still important to plan and move cautiously when re-opening sports. Teams should recognize that COVID-19 activity may be different in different regions of the state, and therefore there is risk associated when inter-team games begin. Participating in games that require travel out of state is strongly discouraged to reduce risk of exposure. Before teams make decisions on traveling to other regions or states for games, they should review activity levels of the virus to inform their decision. See:

- [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)
- [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).

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## Recommendations for re-opening sports

Even though this guidance permits resuming games, scrimmages, and practices per the dates outlined above, the MDH still recommends a phased-in approach for the re-opening of sports. This is especially important for sports that haven't been able to have games up to this point. MDH recommends the following strategy and example as a way to phase into competition:

- Starting on June 24, begin with inter-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 re-opening, review national guidance on how to re-open sports safely:

- 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 \(www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/core-principles-resocialization-collegiate-sport\)](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/)

Consider the kind of contact each sport involves:

- Reduce contact between players as much as possible, even during games.
- Before starting games for any sport, consider the risk associated with that sport.
- It is important to remember that the more physical contact that occurs between people, the greater risk there is in spreading illness.

## Resources

- [National Collegiate Athletic Association \(www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/coronavirus-covid-19\)](http://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/coronavirus-covid-19)
  - [United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee \(www.teamusa.org/-/media/8BEB91F1CD574230BCD39CE0C779B592.ashx\)](http://www.teamusa.org/-/media/8BEB91F1CD574230BCD39CE0C779B592.ashx)
  - [National Federation of State High School Association \(nfhs.org/media/3812287/2020-nfhs-guidance-for-opening-up-high-school-athletics-and-activities-nfhs-smac-may-15\\_2020-final.pdf\)](http://nfhs.org/media/3812287/2020-nfhs-guidance-for-opening-up-high-school-athletics-and-activities-nfhs-smac-may-15_2020-final.pdf)
- In re-opening your sport, refer to your national association or conference guidance on how to return to play. See examples and links to various associations listed in the [Sport-specific resources for return to play](#) section below.

## Requirements for holding games and scrimmages

Develop policies that are considerate of coaches, staff, players, volunteers, and participants at highest risk of complications from COVID-19

- [People Who Are at Higher Risk for Severe Illness \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html\)](http://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 \(PDF\) \(www.leg.state.mn.us/archive/execorders/20-55.pdf\)](http://www.leg.state.mn.us/archive/execorders/20-55.pdf)

Pick the right venue

- When deciding if teams can play in various venues, consider the size of the team(s) and whether the teams can adhere to the capacity and gathering guidance.
- Facility guidance is available at [Minnesota Stay Safe Guidance \(https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp).
- Sports activities must continue to comply with applicable gathering and venue capacity limits.
- For example, 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. If the event is being held in a public setting (e.g., a running event on a public roadway), it is limited to 25 people total (spectator, administrator, and participant).

Minimize crowding at games and practices

- Friends and family should not attend practices to avoid crowding.
- If necessary for them to be at practices, ensure that proper social distancing is maintained and encourage the use of cloth face coverings.
- If spectators are present at scrimmages or games, they must:
- Follow the guidelines for a public gathering space; they must follow social gathering guidance and maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance from each other.

- Follow the guidelines outlined by the hosting facility in terms of capacity and other social distancing measures.
- Facility guidance is available at [Minnesota Stay Safe Guidance \(https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp\)](https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/index.jsp).
- Follow facility requirements regarding wearing cloth face coverings. Cloth face coverings are encouraged even if not required by the facility.

Follow social distancing recommendations

- Adhere to social distancing recommendations when participants are not playing (on the bench, in the dugout, on the sideline, etc.).
- Practice social distancing of 6 feet from other households during drop off/pick up of players.
- Find new ways to show sportsmanship, for example use hands or hats to give a wave.

Promote cloth face coverings or facemasks

- Promote wearing of cloth face coverings or facemasks to reduce risk of COVID-19 transmission, including when arriving at the sports facility.
- Athletes, volunteers, and coaches must follow facility requirements regarding wearing cloth face coverings or facemasks. Even if not required by the facility, athletes, volunteers, and coaches are expected to wear cloth face coverings or facemasks as much as possible when not in games.
- We recognize cloth face coverings or facemasks may be challenging to wear while participating in athletic events.

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.

Identify a plan administrator for your organization's COVID-19 plan

- Communicate your COVID-19 plan with officials, umpires, and trainers.
- This should include expectations around screening, masking, 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).
- Maintain contact information and team rosters, and be prepared to support local public health contact tracing efforts if exposures occur.
- Develop a disease reporting process.
- If a case of COVID-19 is reported to you and is a part of your organization or team, report the case to the Minnesota Department of Health at [health.sports.covid19@state.mn.us](mailto:health.sports.covid19@state.mn.us).
- MDH or local public health will work with you to identify close contacts and do follow-up with your team.

### 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.

### Assess risk of traveling for games

- Participating in games that require travel out of state is strongly discouraged to reduce risk of exposure.
- Before teams make decisions on traveling to other regions or states for games, they should review activity levels of the virus at:
  - [MDH Situation Update for COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/situation.html\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/situation.html),
  - [Governor's COVID-19 Dashboard \(mn.gov/covid19\)](https://mn.gov/covid19)
  - [Center's Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) Cases in the U.S. \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html)

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## 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 \(PDF\) \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/k12planguide.pdf\)](https://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.

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## 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.

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## Plans for modifying play

Be prepared to have plans in place to modify your play should any of the following occur:

- A cluster of infections occur on your team.
- An inability to maintain COVID-19 prevention and response protocols.

- An inability to track and/or isolate players or staff.
- Changes to public health official guidelines regarding group gatherings.

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## Sport-specific resources for return to play

- [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 \(PDF\) \(www.uslacrosse.org/sites/default/files/public/documents/safety/return-to-play-final-1.pdf\)](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)



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