

COVID-19 Organized Sports Recommendations

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This document provides recommendations and considerations for reducing transmission risk of COVID-19 when engaging in sports activities.

All sports teams and organizations—including recreational and community organizations, youth and adult leagues, and college, university, and professional teams and leagues—are encouraged to follow the below guidance, but should also take into consideration their governing league, association, or organization's standards.

Important risk considerations

The risk of spreading COVID-19 during sports activities may increase because of direct physical contact such as tackling or checking, or face-to-face contact. Heavier breathing caused by play intensity, and yelling, grunting, and spitting can also release respiratory particles that contain infectious virus. Moreover, sports activities usually require people to be together for extended periods while putting on and removing equipment or uniforms, participating in practices or games, and sharing transportation to and from sports activities.

If you play sports, you can reduce your risk by playing outdoors, avoiding crowds, and most importantly, getting vaccinated when a vaccine is available. Also consider the following:

- ✓ The risk of transmission increases when sports are played indoors, particularly in settings without optimal ventilation, because fine droplets and aerosol particles can build-up in the air.
- ✓ Social activities and gatherings outside of practices and games are sources of transmission among teammates. Consider limiting social interactions when case levels are high in your community.
- ✓ Transmission risk is higher for teams with low rates of vaccination.
- ✓ If people or teams are considering traveling to other regions or states to participate in sports, they should be aware of COVID-19 activity in that area to inform their decision.
- ✓ Organizations may consider maintaining face coverings (masks) recommendations and recommending social distancing of at least 6 feet where possible when vaccine uptake is low or unknown, or when the vaccine is not yet available for that age group.
- ✓ People may choose to wear a face covering even when not required, and teams and organizations should respect and support those individual choices.

Recommendations for unvaccinated participants

These additional recommendations should be considered for those who are either not vaccinated or not yet eligible for vaccine, or for teams with low rates of vaccination.

Promote testing

- ✓ Unvaccinated people participating in sports programs and activities (including athletes, coaches, officials, and other participants) are strongly recommended to test for COVID-19 bi-weekly. Schedule testing 48-72 hours prior to a game or competition.
- ✓ Fully vaccinated people do not need weekly testing, but should be tested if they are experiencing symptoms.
- ✓ For more information about testing options available to sports teams, go to [COVID-19 Testing for Minnesota Organized Sports Participants \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sportstest.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sportstest.pdf).

Recommendations for practices, games, and competitions

- ✓ Maintain at least 6 feet between participants when they are not playing (e.g., on the bench, in the dugout, on the sideline, in locker rooms and other similar situations). This is especially important when sports are being played in indoor settings.
- ✓ Wear face coverings in indoor settings.
- ✓ Use pods during practices or warm-ups. A “pod” is a group of people that only practice or play with members of their own pod, which limits the potential for team-wide transmission in the event of an exposure or outbreak.
- ✓ When hosting multi-team events and tournaments, consider the following:
 - Avoid overnight stays as much as possible to minimize social activities. Consider hosting events at a central location that does not require teams to stay overnight.
 - Staying at hotels or dining together at restaurants creates another environment where teammates socialize, which increases risk of transmission.

When a member of your team has COVID-19

- ✓ A coach, athletic director, or any other team official who receives a report of COVID-19 in a player or staff member can contact MDH by email at health.sports.covid19@state.mn.us. MDH staff are available to answer questions and provide assistance with identifying close contacts, which is a key measure that teams should take to protect participants. MDH also has template notification letters for close contacts or others on the team who may have questions about their risk of COVID-19.
- ✓ Follow MDH isolation and quarantine recommendations.

- MDH recommends a 14-day quarantine as the most protective option for people who have been exposed to COVID-19. The below links also provide information about shortened quarantine options.
 - People who have COVID-19 should not return to team activities for 10 days from symptom onset, or 10 days from the test date if the player doesn't have symptoms.
- ✓ Refer to the following MDH links for more information on quarantine and isolation:
- [Quarantine Guidance for COVID-19 \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/quarguide.pdf).
 - [If You Are Sick \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/sick.html).

Resources

- [CDC: Sports Program FAQs \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports-faq.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports-faq.html)
- [CDC: 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) (can be applied to all ages)
- [CDC: Playing Sports \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/playing-sports.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/playing-sports.html)
- [CDC: Choosing Safer Activities \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/participate-in-activities.html\)](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/participate-in-activities.html)
- [National Collegiate Athletic Association COVID-19 Coronavirus \(www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/covid-19-coronavirus\)](http://www.ncaa.org/sport-science-institute/covid-19-coronavirus)



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Contact health.communications@state.mn.us to request an alternate format.