



RETURN TO YOUTH SPORTS DURING COVID-19

Important Safety Tips for Coaches/Coordinators



As youth sport programs begin to reopen in our community, the Allen County Health Department would like to share some tips to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 during youth sport activities. Implementation of these guidelines should be guided by what is practical and acceptable for each individual sport or activity.

There are a number of actions the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends to lower the risk of COVID-19 exposure and reduce the risk of spread during competition and practice. The more players and coaches interact closely with each other, share equipment, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. **Please see the table below:**

Lowest Risk:	Performing skill-building drills or conditioning at home, alone or with family members
Increasing Risk:	Team-based practice
More Risk:	Within-team competition
Even More Risk:	Full competition between teams from the same geographical area
Highest Risk:	Full competition between teams from different geographical areas

It's important to understand how the activities you engage in affect who must be quarantined when someone is diagnosed with COVID-19 who participated in your activities. The CDC defines a high-risk contact as anyone within 6 feet of a confirmed case for greater than 15 minutes, however that can vary based on the intensity and contact level of the sport involved. In other words, and especially with contact sports, the mere fact that people are in close contact while doing certain sports while breathing heavily, may make them automatic high-risk contacts regardless of the amount of time they were close. If organizations are not able to keep safety measures in place, it may be necessary to consider dropping down a risk level listed in the table above.

When assessing the risk of disease transmission in your sport, please consider:

- **Physical closeness of players, and the length of time players are close to each other and staff** – for sports that require frequent closeness between players, such as basketball or wrestling, play may be modified to safely increase distance between players by doing the following:
 - Focus on individual skill building versus competition
 - Limit the time players spend close to others by playing full contact only in game-time situations
 - Decrease the number of competitions during the season
 - Put players into smaller groups (cohorts) that remain together and work together through stations, rather than switching or mixing groups. This will make it easier to trace contacts of a confirmed case *and will greatly reduce the number of exposures.*
- **Amount of necessary touching or shared equipment and gear** – minimize equipment sharing whenever possible and clean and disinfect all shared equipment between each use.
- **Ability to engage in social distancing while not actively engaged in play** – attention should be given to maintaining social distancing when players are not actively participating in play, such as on the sideline, in the dug out or sitting on the bench.
- **Age of the player** – older players may be able to follow directions for social distancing and other protective actions like not sharing water bottles. For younger athletes, parents may be asked to monitor their child to ensure all rules are being followed.

- **Players at risk of developing serious disease** – parents and coaches should assess the level of risk for individual players who may be at high risk for severe illness, such as children with asthma, diabetes or other health problems.
- **Size of the team** – Sports with a large number of players may increase the likelihood of disease spread. Consider decreasing team sizes if feasible.
- **Limit non-essential visitors, spectators and volunteers whenever possible.**
- **Travel outside of the community** – Traveling outside of the local community may increase the chances of exposing the team to COVID-19. Consider competing only against teams in the local area.

Promote Behaviors that Reduce Spread:

1. *Staying home when appropriate:* all players/coaches who feel ill, have tested positive, are contacts to a case, or have been tested and are waiting for results **NEED TO STAY HOME**.
2. Encourage proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Build these things into your practices.
3. Encourage the use of cloth face coverings when possible.
4. Encourage frequent cleaning and disinfection of all shared equipment.

When to exclude someone from practice or a game:

If a player or coach is ill with COVID-19 symptoms, the person needs to be encouraged to be tested. The following describe how to handle various scenarios:

- *Not tested* – person must be kept out of the sport and at home until 10 days have passed since the onset of symptoms, AND is free of fever for 72 hours without medication, AND the person has had an overall improvement in their symptoms.
- *Tested and negative* – if evaluated by a physician and diagnosed with something unrelated to COVID-19 – the person may return when appropriate. If not given an official diagnosis, the person should be treated as if they are a COVID-19 case and should stay home until 10 days have passed since the onset of symptoms, AND 72 hours free of fever without the use of medication, AND an overall improvement in symptoms.
- *Tested and positive* – person must stay home until 10 days have passed since the onset of symptoms, AND they have been free of fever for 72 hours without medication, AND they have had an overall improvement in symptoms.

What if someone on the team was a close contact to a confirmed case?

Anyone identified as a high-risk close contact (within 6ft for greater than 15 minutes or if they are deemed a high-risk contact by nature of shorter close exposure based on sport) must stay home for 14-days past the last date of exposure to the positive case. For example, if the person was exposed to a case on July 16th, they could safely return to practice on July 31st. *They need to complete this quarantine period even if they are tested and are negative for COVID-19.*

We realize the impact this pandemic will have on youth sports in general. We appreciate your willingness to enact some of these safety principles in advance so as to lessen the likelihood of large amounts of athletes being put into quarantine when cases are identified.

Source: "Considerations for Youth Sports." *Centers For Disease Control and Prevention*, National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases, May 29, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html>.