

Assessing Risk

The way sports are played, and the way equipment is shared can influence the spread of COVID-19 among players. When you are assessing the risk of spread in your sport, consider:

- **Physical closeness of players, and the length of time that players are close to each other or to staff.** Sports that require frequent closeness between players may make it more difficult to maintain social distancing, compared to sports where players are not close to each other. For close-contact sports (e.g., wrestling, basketball), play may be modified to safely increase distance between players.
 - For example, players and coaches can:
 - 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 a season.

Coaches can also modify practices so players work on individual skills, rather than on competition. Coaches may also put players into small groups (cohorts) that remain together and work through stations, rather than switching groups or mixing groups.

- **Amount of necessary touching of shared equipment and gear (e.g., protective gear, balls, bats, racquets, mats, or water bottles).** It is also 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 eyes. Minimize equipment sharing, and clean and disinfect shared equipment between use by different people to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread.
- **Ability to engage in social distancing while not actively engaged in play (e.g., during practice, on the sideline, or in the dugout).** During times when players are not actively participating in practice or competition, attention should be given to maintaining [social distancing](#) by increasing space between players on the sideline, dugout, or bench. Additionally, coaches can encourage athletes to use downtime for individual skill-building work or cardiovascular conditioning, rather than staying clustered together.
- **Age of the player.** Older youth might be better able to follow directions for social distancing and take other protective actions like not sharing water bottles. If feasible, a coach, parent, or other caregiver can assist with making sure that athletes maintain proper social distancing. For

younger athletes, youth sports programs may ask parents or other household members to monitor their children and make sure that they follow social distancing and take other protective actions (e.g., younger children could sit with parents or caregivers, instead of in a dugout or group area).

- **Players at higher risk of developing serious disease.** Parents and coaches should assess level of risk based on individual players on the team who may be at [higher risk for severe illness](#), such as children who may have asthma, diabetes, or other health problems.
- **Size of the team.** Sports with a large number of players on a team may increase the likelihood of spread, compared to sports with fewer team members. Consider decreasing team sizes, as feasible.
- **Nonessential visitors, spectators, volunteers.** Limit any nonessential visitors, spectators, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations.
- **Travel outside of the local community.** [Traveling](#) outside of the local community may increase the chances of exposing players, coaches, and fans to COVID-19, or unknowingly spreading it to others. This is the case particularly if a team from an area with high levels of COVID-19 competes with a team from an area with low levels of the virus. Youth sports teams should consider competing only against teams in their local area (e.g., neighborhood, town, or community).

Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread

Youth sports organizations may consider implementing several strategies to encourage behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19.

- **Staying Home when Appropriate**
 - Educate staff and player families about when they should stay home and when they can return to activity
 - Actively encourage sick staff, families, and players to stay home. Develop policies that encourage sick employees to stay at home without fear of reprisal, and ensure employees aware of these policies.
 - [Individuals, including coaches, players, and families, should stay home](#) if they have tested positive for or are showing COVID-19 [symptoms](#).
 - Individuals, including coaches, players, and families, who have recently had a [close contact](#) with a person with COVID-19 should also [stay home and monitor their health](#).

- CDC's criteria can help inform return to work/school policies:
 - [If they have been sick with COVID-19](#)
 - [If they have recently had a close contact with a person with COVID-19](#)
- **Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**
 - Teach and reinforce [handwashing](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
 - If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).
 - Do not allow spitting and encourage everyone to cover their coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of their elbow. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used.
- **Cloth Face Coverings**
 - Teach and reinforce the use of [cloth face coverings](#). Face coverings are not intended to protect the wearer, but rather to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 from the person wearing the mask (who may not have any symptoms of disease). Face coverings may be challenging for players (especially younger players) to wear while playing sports. Face coverings should be worn by coaches, youth sports staff, officials, parents, and spectators as much as possible.
 - Wearing cloth face coverings is most important when physical distancing is difficult.
 - People wearing face coverings should be reminded to not touch the 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](#).
 - Note: 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.
- **Adequate Supplies**
 - If hand washing facilities are available, support healthy hygiene by providing supplies including soap, paper towels, tissues, and no-touch/foot pedal trash cans. If hand washing facilities are not available, provide hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol (for coaches, staff and older players who can safely use hand sanitizer).

- **Signs and Messages**

- Post signs in highly visible locations (e.g., at entrances and exits, and in restrooms) that [promote everyday protective measurespdf icon](#) and describe how to [stop the spreadpdf icon](#) of germs such as by [properly washing hands](#) and [properly wearing a cloth face coveringimage icon](#).
- Broadcast [regular announcements on public announcement \(PA\) system](#)
- Include COVID-19 prevention messages (for example, [videos](#)) about behaviors that prevent spread of COVID-19 when communicating with staff, volunteers, officials, and families. This could include links, videos, and prevention messages in emails, on organization websites, and through the team and league's [social media accounts](#).
- Find freely available CDC print and digital resources on [CDC's communication resources](#) main page.

Maintaining Healthy Environments

Youth sports organizations may consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy environments.

- **Cleaning and Disinfection**

- [Clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched surfaces on the field, court, or play surface (e.g., drinking fountains) at least daily, or between uses as much as possible. Use of shared objects and equipment (e.g., balls, bats, gymnastics equipment) should be limited, or cleaned between use by each individual if possible.
- Develop a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection.
- Ensure [safe and correct use](#) and storage of disinfectants, including storing products securely away from children. Use products that meet [EPA disinfection criteriaexternal icon](#).
- Identify an adult staff member or volunteer to ensure proper cleaning and disinfection of objects and equipment, particularly for any shared equipment or frequently touched surfaces.
- Cleaning products should not be used near children, and staff should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children or themselves from inhaling toxic fumes.
- Use gloves when removing garbage bags or handling and disposing of trash. [Wash hands after removing gloves](#).

- **Shared Objects**

- Discourage sharing of items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect. Do not let players share towels, clothing, or other items they use to wipe their faces or hands.
- Make sure there are adequate supplies of shared items to minimize sharing of equipment to the extent possible (e.g., protective gear, balls, bats, water bottles); otherwise, limit use of supplies and equipment to one group of players at a time and clean and disinfect between use.
 - Keep each player's belongings separated from others' and in individually labeled containers, bags, or areas.
 - If food is offered at any event, have pre-packaged boxes or bags for each attendee instead of a buffet or family-style meal. Avoid sharing food and utensils. Offer hand sanitizer or encourage hand washing.

- **Ventilation**

- If playing inside, ensure ventilation systems or fans operate properly. 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.

- **Water Systems**

- To minimize the risk of [Legionnaires' disease](#) and other diseases associated with water, [take steps](#) to ensure that all water systems and features (e.g., drinking fountains, decorative fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown. Drinking fountains should be cleaned and disinfected but encourage staff and players to bring their own water to minimize touching water fountains.

- **Modified Layouts and Social (Physical) Distancing**

- Identify adult staff members or volunteers to help maintain [social distancing](#) among youth, coaches, umpires/referees, and spectators (if state and local directives allow for spectators).
- Space players at least 6 feet apart on the field while participating in the sport (e.g., during warmup, skill building activities, simulation drills)
- Discourage unnecessary physical contact, such as high fives, handshakes, fist bumps, or hugs.
- Prioritize outdoor, as opposed to indoor, practice and play as much as possible.
- Create distance between players when explaining drills or the rules of the game.

- If keeping physical distance is difficult with players in competition or group practice, consider relying on individual skill work and drills.
- Encourage players to wait in their cars with guardians until just before the beginning of a practice, warm-up, or game, instead of forming a group.
- Limit the use of carpools or van pools. When riding in an automobile to a sports event, encourage players to ride to the sports event with persons living in their same household.
- If practices or competition facilities must be shared, consider increasing the amount of time between practices and competitions to allow for one group to leave before another group enters the facility. If possible, allow time for cleaning and/or disinfecting.
- **Physical Barriers and Guides**
 - Provide physical guides, such as signs and tape on floors or playing fields, to make sure that coaches and players remain at least 6 feet apart.
- **Communal Spaces**
 - Close shared spaces such as locker rooms, if possible; otherwise, stagger use and [clean and disinfect](#) between use.
 - Limit the number of players sitting in confined player seating areas (e.g., dugouts) by allowing players to spread out into spectator areas if more space is available (e.g., if spectators are not allowed).

Maintaining Healthy Operations

Youth sports organizations may consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy operations.

- **Protections for Staff and Players at Higher Risk for Severe Illness from COVID-19**
 - Offer options for individuals at [higher risk](#) of severe illness from COVID-19 (risk increases with age, and people of any age with certain medical conditions are at higher risk), such as virtual coaching and in-home drills that limits their exposure risk.
 - Limit youth sports participation to staff and youth who live in the local geographic area (e.g., community, city, town, or county) to reduce risk of spread from areas with higher levels of COVID-19.
- **Regulatory Awareness**
 - Be aware of state or local regulatory agency policies related to group gatherings to determine if events can be held.
- **Identifying Small Groups and Keeping them Together (Cohorting)**

- Keep players together in small groups with dedicated coaches or staff, and make sure that each group of players and coach avoid mixing with other groups as much as possible. Teams might consider having the same group of players stay with the same coach or having the same group of players rotate among coaches.
- Consider staging within-team scrimmages instead of playing games with other teams to minimize exposure among players and teams.
- **Staggered Scheduling**
 - Stagger arrival and drop-off times or locations by cohort (group) or put in place other protocols to limit contact between groups and with guardians as much as possible. One example is increasing the amount of time between practices and competitions to allow for one group to depart before another group enters the facility. This also allows for more time to clean the facility between uses.
 - When possible, use flexible worksites (e.g., telework) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts) to help establish policies and practices for social distancing (maintaining a distance of approximately 6 feet) between employees and others, especially if social distancing is recommended by state and local health authorities.
- **Gatherings, Spectators, and Travel**
 - Avoid group events, such as games, competitions, or social gatherings, where spacing of at least 6 feet between people cannot be maintained.
 - Limit any nonessential 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).
 - Avoid activities and events such as off-site competitions or excursions (e.g., watching a professional team compete).
- **Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact**
 - Designate a youth sports program staff person to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. All coaches, staff, officials, and families should know who this person is and how to contact them.
- **Communication Systems**
 - Put systems in place for:
 - Consistent with applicable law and privacy policies, having coaches, staff, umpires/officials, and families of players (as feasible) self-report to the youth sports organization if they have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, a positive test for COVID-19, or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14

days in accordance with [health information sharing regulations for COVID-19](#)^{external icon} (e.g. see “Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts” in the **Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick** section below), and other applicable laws and regulations.

- Notifying staff, officials, families, and the public of youth sports facility closures and restrictions in place to limit COVID-19 exposure (e.g., limited hours of operation).
- **Leave (Time Off) Policies**
 - Implement flexible sick leave policies and practices for coaches, officials, and staff that enable employees to stay home when they are sick, have been exposed, or [caring for someone who is sick](#).
 - Examine and revise policies for leave, telework, and employee compensation.
 - Leave policies should be flexible and not be punitive to people for taking time off and should allow sick employees to stay home and away from co-workers. Leave policies should also account for employees who need to stay home with their children if there are school or childcare closures, or to care for sick family members.
 - Develop policies for return-to-play after COVID-19 illness. CDC’s criteria to [discontinue home isolation and quarantine](#) can inform these policies.
- **Back-up Staffing Plan**
 - Monitor absenteeism of coaches and officials, cross-train staff, and create a roster of trained back-up personnel.
- **Coach and Staff Training**
 - Train coaches, officials, and staff on all safety protocols.
 - Conduct training virtually, or ensure that [social distancing](#) is maintained during training.
- **Recognize Signs and Symptoms**
 - If feasible, conduct daily health checks (e.g., [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.
- **Sharing Facilities**

- Encourage any organizations that share or use the youth sports facilities to also follow these considerations.
- **Support Coping and Resilience**
 - Encourage employees to take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media if they are feeling overwhelmed or distressed.
 - Promote healthy eating, exercising, getting sleep, and finding time to unwind.
 - Encourage employees to talk with people they trust about their concerns and how they are feeling.
 - Consider posting signs for the national distress hotline: 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUs to 66746