



Guidance for Youth, Adult, and School Sports

October 12, 2021

The State of Rhode Island is encouraging all sports organizations, teams, groups, coaches, and athletes to follow the public health guidance and best practices below to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19 while engaging in sporting activities.

Youth sports organizations should also refer to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [guidance on sports and recreation](#), [guidance on COVID-19 vaccines](#), and [guidance on indoor and outdoor activities](#). School sports organizations should refer to [the Rhode Island Department of Education's \(RIDE\) back to school guidance](#) and the rules and regulations of the sports organizations that govern school sports, such as local school committees and the [Rhode Island Interscholastic League \(RIIL\)](#).

Playing sports has both physical and psychological health benefits for children and adults. However, playing sports may increase the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Participants, athletes, and the parents of minor athletes should carefully weigh the risks of playing sports during the COVID-19 pandemic. Factors to take into consideration include the sport, setting, local COVID-19 transmission rates, personal vaccination status, and individual circumstances, such as underlying health conditions, which may increase the severity of the effects of COVID-19.

If you have any questions about this guidance, please contact Nancy Toth at the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) at Nancy.Toth.ctr@health.ri.gov.

General Requirements and Guidelines

- **COVID-19 Vaccination:** All individuals who are eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccination are strongly encouraged to obtain a vaccination. Information regarding vaccines or scheduling a vaccine appointment can be found on the [RIDOH vaccination information page](#). Individuals are considered fully vaccinated 14 days after obtaining all recommended doses of a COVID-19 vaccine authorized by the United States Food and Drug Administration or World Health Organization.

If you are interested in hosting a vaccination event for your league, team or organization, please complete the [Rhode Island COVID-19 Vaccine Community Partners & K-12 Interest Form](#).

- **COVID-19 Testing:** Athletes, coaches, and staff taking part in sports activities who are not fully vaccinated are encouraged to obtain a [COVID-19 test](#) weekly (or more frequently), except in cases where they have tested positive within the past 90 days. Anyone who is vaccinated or unvaccinated and falls within the definition of a close contact as defined in an existing Executive Order (EO) must get tested.

Rhode Islanders can schedule a free COVID-19 test for themselves or dependent children on portal.ri.gov regardless of whether they have symptoms or insurance. Most sites require an appointment. Same-day testing is also available in many communities. More information can be found on the [RIDOH testing page](#).

Sports leagues and organizations that participate in or host indoor sports are strongly encouraged to require a negative COVID-19 test or proof of vaccination from all participants prior to the start of each competition. Sports leagues and organizations are also encouraged to establish policies that require weekly COVID-19 testing for all participants.

- **Pending Test Results:** Coaches, staff, athletes, officials, and spectators who are symptomatic should not attend games, practices, or any related sports activities while waiting for COVID-19 test results. Fully vaccinated coaches, staff, athletes, officials, and spectators who have been in close contact with someone who is COVID-19 positive are required to wear masks in public indoor

settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result under [current EOs](#). Unvaccinated individuals are required to quarantine at home while waiting for COVID-19 test results unless they are exempt from quarantine under current EOs.

- **COVID-19 Positive Case and Quarantine:** If a player, coach, official or member of a team, sports organization, or a stable group tests positive for COVID-19, members of the team or group who have been in close contact with the individual may be required to quarantine in accordance with current EOs. Visit [RIDOH's quarantine and isolation page](#) for more information.

If RIDOH identifies a positive COVID-19 case or outbreak connected to an athlete, coach, official, sports team or organization, all participants and organizations should fully and promptly cooperate with the RIDOH case investigation and contact tracing. Those connected to a case or outbreak should also follow instructions provided from RIDOH regarding [quarantine and the resumption of activities](#).

- **Face Coverings:** Face coverings must be worn in accordance with current EOs. All individuals, regardless of vaccination status, should continue to wear a face covering indoors. Face coverings are strongly encouraged for individuals who are not fully vaccinated during activities that involve a crowded outdoor setting or sustained close contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated.

School coaches, staff, volunteers, players and spectators in public school K-12 settings must wear face coverings in accordance with existing EOs, [Back to School RI Guidance](#), and [RIDE K-12 Health and Safety Guidance](#). Additionally, private establishments and organizations may require participants to wear face coverings. When utilizing face coverings, athletes are encouraged to bring extra face coverings and change into a clean, dry face covering in case their face covering becomes wet or soiled while engaged in sports activities.

- **Screening:** All players, staff, coaches, officials, volunteers, and spectators should be screened for symptoms related to COVID-19 prior to the beginning of each activity or before entering an indoor sports facility. A screening tool is available, in [English](#) and [Spanish](#), to aid with proper screening. Any person exhibiting signs of illness should be excluded.
- **Stable Group:** Organizations and individuals that operate sports leagues, camps, and clinics (including all interscholastic, “pick-up” games, and other informal athletic activities) which have participants who are unvaccinated are strongly encouraged to organize players and participants into “stable groups.” The term “stable groups” means the same individuals, including players, coaches, staff, and volunteers, remain in the same group over the course of the entire program. Participants should not change from one group to another. When stable groups are not engaged in active play with one another, stable groups should maintain a minimum physical distance of six feet between other stable groups.
- **Interstate Sporting Events:** All sports organizations, teams and groups should follow any current [RIDOH travel recommendations](#).
- **Contact Information:** The collection of contact information (e.g., full name, telephone number, and date and times on site) for spectators and athletes by indoor sports facilities and sports organizations is encouraged for the purpose of contact tracing.

All organizations, participants, parents, guardians, and spectators are strongly encouraged to cooperate with RIDOH in providing any information for contact tracing purposes.

- **Spectators:** All spectators must follow current EOs. Sporting venues may impose additional conditions or restrictions.
- **Shared Objects:** Discourage sharing of items that are difficult to clean, sanitize, or disinfect between use (e.g., bats, racquets). Participants should bring and use their own equipment where possible, or have equipment designated and labeled for individual use by the organization. Cups, bottles, or other food/beverage items should not be shared, and water

bottles should be clearly marked with the individual's name.

- **Transportation/Ride Sharing:** Coaches, volunteers, staff, and other team or stable group members are encouraged to not transport any athlete(s) who are not in their immediate household or not fully vaccinated. Transportation for school sports teams should follow [RIDE K-12 Health and Safety Guidance](#). Everyone riding a bus must wear a face covering in accordance with federal law.
- **Hand Cleaning:** Frequent handwashing or hand sanitizing should be promoted with all participants engaged in sports activities and spectators. If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol may be used. Handwashing and/or sanitizing should occur upon entering and leaving an athletic facility and before, during, and after the sport activities. Athletes and coaches are encouraged to limit backslapping, hugging, handshakes, and fist bumps.

Sports Leagues, Teams, and Organizations

As more data and information have become available about the contagiousness of the coronavirus and its variants, the reliance on the “potential infection risk by sport” matrix has been updated to align with CDC guidance for [school and sports](#) and [prevention strategies](#). These strategies focus on vaccination, universal indoor masking, physical distancing where possible, screening testing, ventilation, handwashing and respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing in combination with quarantine and isolation, and cleaning and disinfection.

CDC recommends the following **sports-related risks** be considered when individuals engage in sports:

- **Setting of the Sporting Event or Activity.** In general, the risk of COVID-19 transmission is lower when playing outdoors than in indoor settings. Consider the ability to keep physical distancing in various settings at the sporting event (e.g., fields, benches/team areas, locker rooms, spectator viewing areas, spectator facilities/restrooms).
- **Physical Proximity.** COVID-19 spread is more likely to occur in sports that require sustained close contact (such as wrestling, hockey, football).
- **Number of People.** The risk of COVID-19 spread increases with increasing numbers of athletes, spectators, teachers, and staff.
- **Level of Intensity of Activity.** The risk of COVID-19 spread increases with the intensity of the sport.
- **Duration of Time.** The risk of COVID-19 spread increases the more time athletes, coaches, teachers, staff, and spectators spend in close proximity or in indoor group settings. This includes time spent traveling to/from sporting events, meetings, meals, and other settings related to the event.
- **Presence of People More Likely to Develop Severe Illness.** People at increased risk of severe illness might need to take [extra precautions](#).

School Sports

In partnership with RIDE and RIDOH, RIIL has developed [guidelines for high school sports](#). All sports organizations are encouraged to follow RIIL guidelines or any guidelines that the sport's national governing body puts forth to limit the spread of COVID-19.

- **Specific School Sports Provisions:** The following applies to high school, middle school, and elementary school sports:
 - School districts may develop guidance and/or policies that are more restrictive than those established here.
 - All school districts, regardless of distance or in-person learning policies, may offer sports in accordance with this guidance.

- Athletes, coaches, and staff should check with their school athletic director for specific information on the school's specific testing protocols.
- It is strongly encouraged that athletes who participate in indoor sports with more sustained close contact obtain a negative COVID-19 test prior to the start of each competition.
- When traveling, teams should follow the busing and student transportation provisions in the [RIDE K-12 Health and Safety Guidance](#).