



## Guidance for Youth, Adult, and School Sports

April 19, 2022

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 [K-12 Outbreak Response Playbook](#) 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](mailto: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. Additionally, those eligible to receive a booster vaccination are encouraged to do so. Individuals are considered up to date with their vaccines if they are age 12 or older and have received all recommended vaccine doses, including boosters. For more information regarding vaccines, vaccine boosters, and/or vaccine appointment scheduling, visit the [RIDOH vaccination information page](#) or speak to your child's primary care physician.

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 are encouraged to obtain a [COVID-19 test](#) weekly (or more frequently if not up to date with their vaccines) when [community levels](#) are high. To find your community's current risk level, please visit CDC's [COVID-19 Community Levels web page](#). Testing is not recommended in cases where athletes, coaches, or staff have tested positive within the past 90 days.

There are many ways for Rhode Islanders to get a COVID-19 test. Visit [covid.ri.gov/testing](https://covid.ri.gov/testing) to find the location most convenient for you including primary care offices, pharmacies, respiratory clinics, and State-run test sites. There is also information on at-home tests. The federal government offers [free at-home tests](#) as well as treatment resources through the [Test to Treat program](#).

During high [community levels](#), 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.

Coaches, staff, athletes, officials, and spectators who are up to date with their vaccines, have been in close contact with someone who is COVID-19 positive, and are asymptomatic are not required to quarantine but should get a test on day 5 after exposure and wear a well-fitting mask in public indoor settings for 10 days. Individuals who are not up to date with their vaccines, as well as those who are up to date on their vaccines but are symptomatic, should quarantine at home while waiting for COVID-19 test results.

- **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. Visit [RIDOH's quarantine and isolation page](#) for more information on quarantine and isolation recommendations.

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 as requested. 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 should be worn indoors during periods of high [community levels](#). When utilizing face coverings, athletes are encouraged to bring extras and change into a clean, dry face covering in the case it 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 during periods of medium or high [community levels](#). Any person exhibiting signs of illness should be excluded.
- **Interstate Sporting Events:** All sports organizations, teams and groups should follow any current [RIDOH travel recommendations](#).

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

- **Spectators:** There are no current state restrictions on spectators at sporting events. Sporting venues may impose additional conditions or restrictions such as requiring proof of vaccination or wearing of face coverings at their discretion.
- **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 COVID-19 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](#).

### **Best Practices for Improved Ventilation for Indoor Sports Facilities**

COVID-19 spreads from person to person when an infected individual breathes out droplets and small particles that contain the virus. This happens when we breathe, talk, yell, or simply move around. Ventilation and good air circulation inside buildings, schools, and homes reduce the spread of COVID-19. During colder months, as more sports take place indoors, available windows may be closed. Improving ventilation in facilities with indoor sports can reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Each facility has different needs for ventilation and airflow. When assessing ventilation, it is important to consider the size of the area, the number of individuals in the area at any given time, the level of activity transpiring in the area (e.g. are people breathing heavily, talking loudly, moving around, or sitting still), and access to operable windows and doors to the outside. Best practices include increasing outdoor air ventilation instead of using recirculated air and increasing air filtration as much as possible for the ventilation and filtration system.

Improved ventilation is even more effective against COVID-19 when combined with other steps to reduce the amount of airborne virus, such as masking, vaccination, testing, and distancing. If you are a sports facility owner and would like more information on how to improve your facility's ventilation and air filtration, please review [RIDOH's guidance on airflow, ventilation and air filtration](#).

### **School Sports**

In partnership with the Rhode Island Department of Education and RIDOH, RIIL has developed [guidelines for high school sports](#). All sports organizations are encouraged to follow RIIL guidelines, the [K-12 Outbreak Response Playbook](#), 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.
  - When traveling, teams should follow the busing and student transportation provisions.