



INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR ATHLETICS

Michigan.gov/Coronavirus

Updated 1/4/2021

Summary of Recent Changes on 1/4/2021

- Guidance updated based on current levels of COVID-19 transmission and activities permitted under epidemic orders
- Section added on “Testing and Mitigation Measures for Athletic Practice and Play During Statewide Athletics Pause.”

Executive Summary

- Organized sports, like other activities where participants gather and interact in close proximity across households, pose COVID-19 risks. Depending on COVID-19 infection rates, sports may need to be temporarily suspended to avoid exposing participants to unacceptable levels of personal risk and accelerating COVID-19 transmission in their communities.
- Contact sports, such as football and wrestling, pose a higher risk of transmitting COVID-19 to athletes, coaches, and the general community, than non-contact sports. Indoor sports pose higher risks than outdoor sports. Different restrictions and mitigation measures may be needed based on the particular risk of each sport and current rates of transmission.
- Teams that can implement robust public health measures may be able to decrease risk, and can operate while other teams may not be able to do so safely.
- As the epidemiology of COVID-19 around the country and the state of Michigan evolves, MDHHS will regularly review its recommendations about which sports are permitted to be played, and what mitigation measures are necessary.
- CDC or MDHHS guidance should be adhered to for sports teams/clubs and facilities that are continuing to operate at any given time.

Sports and Risk of COVID-19 Transmission

Counties around the country have faced outbreaks of COVID-19 associated with sports teams. In Michigan, there were 42 outbreaks associated with athletics (K-12 schools, professional,

collegiate, and commercial venues) in August and September of 2020 (before restrictions on contact sports were implemented). Outbreaks of this magnitude have the potential to affect not just a sports team, but the community in which the players and coaches reside as well.

Sports that require frequent closeness between players make it more difficult to prevent disease transmission, compared to sports where players are not as close to each other. The risk of COVID-19 transmission is increased by the number of individuals a player physically interacts with, as well as the intensity and duration of that interaction.

Contact sports, meaning sports involving more than occasional and fleeting contact, pose a particular challenge in the era of COVID-19 due to the closeness of the players and potential for infectious disease transmission. Even with mitigation measures in place, such as wearing of masks, disease transmission cannot be completely prevented when players are in prolonged or intense contact. Contact sports include the following: football, basketball, rugby, field hockey, soccer, lacrosse, wrestling, hockey, boxing, futsal and martial arts with opponents. These risks are even greater for indoor contact sports where there is not natural ventilation to mitigate the close proximity of participants.

As the epidemiology of COVID-19 around the country and the state of Michigan evolves, MDHHS will continue to review these recommendations. Lower rates of transmission may allow for indoor and contact sports to resume safely in the future.

General Mitigation Measures for Athletics

Whenever organized sports are permitted to operate, there are important steps organizers can take to increase the safety of activities.

Athletes must wear a face mask at all times, except for swimming-based sports where face masks are not able to be worn safely.

- Adjusting the level and intensity of physical activity and taking frequent rest breaks can improve toleration of a face mask.
- If a cloth face mask cannot be tolerated while engaging in athletic activity, a plastic face shield covering the mouth and nose would also be acceptable.
- If an athlete cannot tolerate either a cloth face mask or a plastic face shield, then the athlete should make adjustments to the activity that would maintain distancing of 6 feet or more at all times (individual practice rather than game play, for example).

In addition, MDHHS recommends the following behaviors to reduce risk of disease transmission whenever athletes are practicing or competing:

- Enforce hand washing and the covering of coughs and sneezes.

- Ensure adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene practices for participants, spectators, and employees, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol content, paper towels and tissues.
- Ensure enough time between events or practices to allow for proper cleaning and disinfection of the facilities and shared equipment.
- Discourage sharing of items that are difficult to clean, sanitize or disinfect. Do not let players share towels, clothing or other items used to wipe faces or hands.
- 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.
- When disinfecting, use products that meet [EPA's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2](#) and that are appropriate for the surface. Prior to wiping the surface, allow the disinfectant to sit for the necessary contact time recommended by the manufacturer. Train staff on proper cleaning procedures to ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants.
- Consider making available individual disinfectant wipes in bathrooms.
- Provide no-touch trash cans and, if equipped, encourage use of no-touch doors.
- 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, and wear a mask at all times if traveling with persons outside their household.
- For younger athletes, it may be beneficial for parents or other household members to monitor their children, make sure 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).
- Consider having participants report in proper gear before events and launder clothing immediately upon return home.
- No pre- or post-event handshakes, hugs, fist bumps, high fives or contact celebrations.
- No spitting, chewing gum or tobacco in the event areas.
- Prioritize outdoor, as opposed to indoor, practice and play as much as possible.
- 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.
- When contact sports remain unsafe, but other athletics are permitted, contact sport teams may meet and practice in a way that is socially distanced and avoids close contacts between participants.

For a full list of mitigation measures see the following resources:



For more information, visit Michigan.gov/Coronavirus.

- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html>
- https://www.michigan.gov/documents/coronavirus/Youth_Sports_Informed_Choice_06_24_2020_695135_7.docx

Testing and Additional Mitigation Measures for Athletic Practice and Play During Statewide Athletics ‘Pause’

During periods of high COVID risk in which organized sports are otherwise not permitted, teams that undertake significant infection control and mitigation measures may still practice and compete. These measures include:

Testing, Quarantine, and Isolation Procedures

- COVID-19 antigen testing of all active athletes must be conducted at least 3 times per week on non-consecutive days, with testing conducted prior to the start of practice or competition on those days.
- Athletes who have recovered from confirmed COVID-19 in the past 3 months and remain symptom-free may participate in athletics without testing if they can provide a letter from their doctor attesting that they fall into this category (the individual must have had a positive diagnostic test within 3 months, not an antibody test).
- Athletes must not play or practice while [symptomatic](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html) (URL: [bit.ly/3oCRHe5](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html)) even with a negative COVID-19 test, per current CDC guidelines. They may return only when symptoms have resolved for >24 hours and with a negative RT-PCR result.
- Athletes who are close contacts of someone with COVID-19 must quarantine, and may only resume participation once [LHD quarantine requirements](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/coronavirus/LHD_quarantine_requirements.pdf) have been met (usually 10-14 days). Under no circumstances may a negative test result be used to return to practice or play sooner than 7 days.
- Athletes who test positive with an antigen test should isolate immediately and obtain a RT-PCR test within 48 hours. Unless the athlete tests negative on that RT-PCR test, they must isolate and may not return to team play or practices for the duration of their infectious period as determined by [current CDC guidance](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html). (URL: [bit.ly/2TBf0Xq](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html))
- Athletes (symptomatic or asymptomatic) who test positive on a RT-PCR test must isolate for 10 days from date of first positive test (if asymptomatic) or as determined by [current CDC guidance](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html) (URL: [bit.ly/2TBf0Xq](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html)) (if symptomatic). They may not return to team play or practices for the duration of their infectious period.
- Adherence to the above procedures must be supervised by team medical staff. Team medical staff should have adequate capacity to follow-up on positive tests and maintain

prompt follow-up for case investigation and full contact tracing (including affected contacts outside of the athletic team).

Additional mitigation measures

- Athletes must rigorously comply with the mitigation measures discussed above.
- Athletes must continue to wear masks during practice and play, as discussed above, as well as in locker rooms, on the sidelines, and when entering or leaving the field.
- Coaches, staff, and spectators must continue to use masks.
- During the two weeks before and after events, other than to attend in-person school, athletes should have no social contact outside of teammates, team staff/ coaches, or their households. Athletes should comply with all MDHHS gathering orders. They must completely avoid participation in non-team gatherings, and this should be strictly enforced by team staff and coaches.
- Complete compliance is needed with local and state public health officials during the case investigation and contact tracing process, and with enforcement of quarantine and isolation requirements.

Enhanced Testing and Mitigation Measures for Safer Athletic Practice and Play without the use of Face Masks:

There are tightly defined circumstances in which safer athletic practice and play is possible without the use of face masks or face shields. This involves compliance with all of the measures outlined in the section entitled “Testing and Additional Mitigation Measures for Athletic Practice and Play During Statewide Athletics ‘Pause’,” and increases the mandatory testing cadence to at least 6 times per week with a turnaround time fast enough to confirm negative results within a day of unmasked close contact.

For the latest information on Michigan’s response to COVID-19, please visit

Michigan.gov/Coronavirus. You may also call the COVID-19 Hotline at 888-535-6136 or email COVID-19@michigan.gov.