

# NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPORTS

This document provides basic guidance to be used by schools, coaches and athletic directors to help reduce the transmission of COVID-19 during sporting activities. With the virus that causes COVID-19 continuing to circulate in North Dakota, activities where people, including athletes, come together poses a risk for virus transmission. Athletic competition, with the physical exertion, deep breathing, physical closeness and increased time spent together, further increases that risk of transmission. The following guidance, even if fully implemented, likely will not stop all transmission but it may reduce transmission and may minimize the impacts of isolation and quarantine, depending on the situation.

## REDUCE THE RISK OF TRANSMISSION

- Designate one person or a small team to plan and implement COVID-19 prevention measures
  - Include a communications plan in the overall plan
    - Notify administration
    - Assist public health official to rapidly notify athletes, parents and coaches of exposures
    - Notification of fans of possible exposures, if warranted
- Protect those that are at [greatest risk for complications or death](#) if they become ill with COVID-19
  - Athletes or coaches with underlying health conditions should avoid close contact with others and avoid large crowds
  - Athletes or coaches that have a household contact or other frequent contact with a person at high risk should also avoid close contact with other people and large crowds
  - Consider options and alternatives for these people to participate
- Monitor and check the health of athletes before every practice and game.
- Make a plan for how you will handle a sick athlete or coach

- People with [symptoms](#) should consult with their health care provider to determine the need for testing and not be allowed to participate.
- Increase ventilation to indoor arenas and gymnasiums, to the extent possible, by opening doors, windows and increasing the amount of outside air circulating through the HVAC system.
- If possible, physical distancing of at least six feet should be maintained. Modify the game or the competition to increase distance between competitors, if possible. At practice and during games, athletes should try to remain separated from each other. Maintain at least six feet between people on the bench or sidelines.
- Discontinue hand shakes before and after games
- Hand sanitizer should be readily available
- Coaches should avoid face to face coaching
- If possible, wear cloth face coverings or masks while competing and practicing
  - Masks that become saturated with sweat, saliva or water will likely be less effective
- Athletes should have their own water bottle, clearly marked with their names
- Cohort as much as possible. During practice, cohort athletes into small groups and keep groups separated from each other.
- Use skill building drills that do not require or that minimize close contact
- Keep drills that require close or physical contact to a minimum and as short as possible
- In between activities requiring close contact, keep players separated by at least six feet
- Stagger schedules for practice and locker rooms to avoid crowding
- Weight room policies should reflect those used by gyms and [fitness centers](#) in the North Dakota Smart Restart.
- Practice outdoors, if possible. Outdoor events appear to be a much lower risk for virus transmission than indoor events.
- Avoid crowding in locker rooms and athletes are encouraged to shower at home after practices or games.
  - Staggering schedules
  - Using multiple locker rooms
- Hygiene and [cleaning](#) will remain important. Gear, equipment and locker rooms should be cleaned after every practice. School specific guidance can be found [here](#).
- If possible, compete only with teams in the general geographic area.

- Bus rides pose a risk because of the potential crowding into a small indoor area.
  - Space seating so people are 6 feet apart.
    - If not possible, cohort into small groups and keep groups separated
  - If possible, practical or feasible, keep windows open
  - Assign seating and ensure that people stay in their assigned seats to more easily identify contacts and to limit contacts
  - Consider using multiple vehicles
  - Wear masks
- If a school needs to close due to COVID-19, practices and games should be suspended until school can resume.
- Be sure athletes are up-to-date with immunizations to prevent the spread of other illnesses.

## STANDARD PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

Persons with COVID-19 who have symptoms and were directed to care for themselves at home may discontinue isolation under the following conditions:

- At least 10 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared* **and**
- At least 24 hours have passed *since last fever* without the use of fever-reducing medications **and**
- Symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) have improved
- If asymptomatic, then the person can discontinue isolation 10 days from the day of diagnosis.

Close contacts are defined as those people who were within six feet of a person confirmed to have COVID-19 for a period of 15 minutes or longer. During routine sporting events and practices, all participants would generally fall into the category of a close contact. Likewise, on a bus ride, those people seated within six feet of the infected person would be considered close contacts. Measures that reduce contact among athletes may lessen the number of people exposed. However, athletes may not only be exposed during practice or competition, but also through social and family contacts. More information regarding transmission risk and on close contacts and sports can be found [here](#).

Close contacts are asked to quarantine at home for 14 days from their last exposure. If a household member has been diagnosed, the household contacts would not finish their

quarantine until 14 days after the infected person is considered no longer infectious. Thus, quarantine periods of 24 days or more are possible.

## GAMES, FANS AND ATTENDANCE GUIDANCE

North Dakota's Smart Restart plan delineates risk at either a state or a county level. Event attendance and facility occupancy should follow Smart Restart guidance. Event planners should follow the [guidance](#) for large gatherings from the Smart Restart plan. Staggering rows for seating and otherwise marking areas where fans can sit can help reduce crowding and maintain physical distancing. Efforts should be made to carefully control entrance and egress to and from facilities to avoid crowding. Social distancing applies to outdoor events as well. Attendees should be told to stay home if they have any symptoms of COVID-19 and encouraged to wear masks, practice physical distancing, use good respiratory etiquette and practice good hygiene. Ventilation in the arena or gymnasium should be adjusted to allow for high rates of air exchanges, bringing in more fresh air from the outside. Foodservice at games should comply with [restaurant](#) and universal standard protocols.

## MORE RESOURCES

North Dakota Department of Health <https://www.health.nd.gov/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/protect-yourself-and-others>

North Dakota High School Activities Association <https://ndhsaa.com/>

North Dakota Smart Restart <https://www.ndresponse.gov/covid-19-resources/covid-19-business-and-employer-resources/nd-smart-restart/nd-smart-restart-protocols/fitness-centers>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html>

NFHS <https://www.nfhs.org/>