

COVID-19 RECOMMENDATIONS ON CLOSE CONTACTS on SPORTS TEAMS

The purpose of this guidance is to provide recommendations about management of a COVID-positive member (case) of an athletic team, as well as their teammates and opposing team who are potentially exposed during competition.

Participation in competitive sports carries varying levels of risk for transmission of COVID-19, depending upon the degree of close contact and cardiovascular exertion. Sports transmission risk levels are categorized below:

Higher Risk: Sports that involve close, sustained contact between participants, lack of significant protective barriers, and a high probability that respiratory particles will be transmitted between participants.

Examples: Wrestling, football, boys' lacrosse, competitive cheer, dance

Moderate Risk: Sports that involve close, sustained contact, but with protective equipment in place that may reduce the likelihood of respiratory particle transmission between participants OR intermittent close contact OR group sports OR sports that use equipment that can't be cleaned between participants.

Examples: Basketball, volleyball*, baseball*, softball*, soccer, water polo, gymnastics* (if the equipment can't be sufficiently cleaned between competitors), ice hockey, field hockey, tennis*, swimming relays, pole vault*, high jump*, long jump*, girls' lacrosse, rowing where two or more rowers in shell, 7-on-7 football

*Could potentially be considered a lower risk with appropriate cleaning of equipment and use of masks by participants

Lower Risk: Sports that can be done with social distancing or individually with no sharing of equipment or the ability to clean the equipment between use by competitors.

Examples: Individual running events, throwing events (javelin, shot put, discus), individual swimming, golf, weightlifting, alpine skiing, sideline cheer, single sculling, cross country running (with staggered starts)

Resource: [National Federation of High School Associations Guidance for Opening Up High School Athletics](#)

Close Contacts: While the CDC classically defines a [close contact](#) as someone who has been within 6 feet of a person who tests positive for COVID-19 for a period of 15 minutes or more a day, the risk of transmission from a further distance and/or less time is increasingly likely with higher risk sports due to the level of contact and/or intensity of exercise. Risk of transmission is also higher for indoor versus outdoor sports.

Therefore, the true definition of a close contact varies between low, moderate, and high-risk sports. Hence, the definition of a close contact for a high-risk sport will include a greater number of players exposed for a shorter time-period compared with a low-risk sport. This scientific fact has resulted in high school, college, and professional sports seasons being [delayed or canceled in many areas](#) around the country.

The majority of college and professional sports teams playing their seasons have incorporated vigorous testing and social distancing protocols that are not feasible at the middle school or high school level or on an amateur level.

For contact tracing and definition of close contacts of a COVID-positive teammate on same and opposing sports teams, the North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) provides the following guidelines:

TEAMMATES

Low, Medium, and High-Risk Sports: Per CDC recommendations, NDDoH deems teammates of a COVID-positive player exposed to that teammate close contacts within 48 hours prior to onset of the positive player's symptoms or test date (if asymptomatic) through 10 days after. An exception to this may be teams who have been practicing, transporting, and congregating (sidelines, huddles, locker room etc.) in distinct, consistent small pods that do not physically interact with each other. The contact tracer will work with the coach of the team to determine what mitigation strategies are in place that might eliminate risk of transmission to a subset of teammates. Note that same-team scrimmages of moderate and high-risk sports would render all who participate a close contact.

OPPOSING TEAMS

Low-Risk Sports: Those on an opposing team who are within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes (cumulatively) of a COVID-positive patient are considered close contacts.

Medium and High-Risk Sports: Those on an opposing team exposed to the COVID-positive player within 48 hours prior to the onset of the positive player's symptoms or test date (if asymptomatic) are considered close contacts if they were on the field/court with the positive player and/or within 6 feet of the player for more than 15 minutes. An exception to this may be a player who remains in a specific position and has limited interaction with certain opponents on the field (i.e., a soccer goalie and opposition's defensive line). The contact tracer will work with the coach of the opposing team to determine if there is a subset of field players who meet the criteria for no significant exposure to the infectious player.

Quarantine: People identified as close contacts by public health should stay home at least 14 calendar days from the last time exposed to a COVID-19 case. If asymptomatic, contacts should be tested 7 -10 days after last exposure; at the time of symptom onset if applicable. The 14-day quarantine must continue regardless of a negative test result.

Isolation: People who have tested positive for COVID-19 should stay home at least 10 calendar days from onset of symptoms (or collection date of test if no symptoms) and for 24 hours with no fever (without the use of medication) and improvement of symptoms – whichever is longer.