

RETURN TO ORGANIZED YOUTH SPORTS

8 QUESTIONS FAMILIES CAN ASK ABOUT COVID-19 SAFETY



Youth sports have started returning from the COVID-19 shutdown, and many other organizations are making plans to resume play. As they do, below are questions that parents/caregivers can ask themselves or their child's sports provider about COVID-19 safety measures, drawn from best practice and current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance.

Note: the list assumes that organizations have approval from state and local public health officials to practice and play. Find a directory of state health departments [here](#). *If the organization is not following local guidance, your child should not return to play.*

1. Is my child or are household members more vulnerable to becoming ill from COVID-19?

Children who have pulmonary, neurologic, genetic, metabolic conditions, or who have congenital heart disease are potentially at higher risk for severe illness. If your child or a household member they spend time with has asthma, obesity or any of the other identified conditions identified as potentially problematic (see CDC list [here](#)), consult a healthcare provider.

2. Has my child's program shared a detailed plan for COVID-19 risk mitigation?

A quality plan should assess risk of your child's sport and include information on general hygiene enforcement, equipment management, training session management, and both physical and mental wellness. Compare those plans to recommendations made by national governing bodies in [soccer](#), [baseball](#), [swimming](#), [football](#), [golf](#), [lacrosse](#) and [other sports](#).

3. Is the program embracing a phased approach to re-opening?

The best return to play plans align with [CDC risk categories](#) and take a phased approach, especially with contact sports. Regardless of the phase achieved, your child's program should be prepared to revert to an earlier phase as needed. The CDC risk categories:

Lowest Risk: Skill-building drills or conditioning at home, alone or with family.

Increasing Risk: Team-based practice.

More Risk: Within-team competition.

Even More Risk: Competition between teams from same local geographic area.

Highest Risk: Competition between teams from different geographic areas.

Since most young athletes' fitness levels have declined during quarantine and the pandemic, it is critical to understand the ramp-up plan to strategically increase performance measurements.

4. How will the program identify players or coaches who are potentially infected?

Ask your child's administrator and/or coach for the specific procedures in place, e.g. symptom and temperature checking, acknowledgement that a person can be asymptomatic, communication with local health officials and team, cleaning and disinfection procedure, and adherence to home isolation. Many teams are conducting pre-practice questionnaires to ask about symptoms and exposure to COVID-19 and then, if positive, the athlete should stay home. Sick players or coaches should not return to play until they have met the [CDC's criteria](#) to end home isolation.

5. How do I determine if my child is infected and should avoid participation?

Common symptoms include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea. If you think your child has been exposed to COVID-19, contact a healthcare provider for testing and a course of action.

6. Is my child old enough to understand the reasons for maintaining physical distancing?

If you believe the answer is no, ask the program provider what plans they have in place to prevent violations and if a volunteer can be helpful on site, if recommended limitations on group sizes allow.

7. What mask procedures are in place for my child's program?

While it is hard for youth to wear masks during play, it should be encouraged on the sidelines as well as for any non-players (e.g., coaches, officials, family members, and other spectators). Guidelines may change based on level of exertion, weather, local/state/federal guidelines, and evolving medical and health information.

8. How comfortable am I signing a COVID-19 waiver?

Many organizers have updated their participation waivers to include language that aims to prevent legal recourse in case your child or anyone else contracts COVID-19. Any waiver you sign should be accompanied by documentation of the measures the program will take to mitigate risk of infection.

SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

[Project Play – COVID-19 Youth Sports Resource Page](#)

[Project Play – Return to Play Risk Assessment](#)

[Project Play – Healthy Sport Index](#)

[U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee Guidance on Return to Training \[PDF\]](#)

[U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee Guidance on Sports & Events \[PDF\]](#)

[CDC Youth Sports Guidance](#)

[CDC Childcare, Schools, and Youth Programs Guidance](#)

[ACSM Return to Sports and Exercise During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

Developed by



The materials are based on CDC guidelines, and were reviewed by experts from the American College of Sports Medicine and the Hospital for Special Surgery which also offer free resources.