



INTERIM GUIDANCE FOR CONTACT SPORTS

Michigan.gov/Coronavirus

Updated 9/14/2020

Executive Summary

- Given the available epidemiological data and timing as many schools and universities return to campus, contact sports, such as football and wrestling, pose a high risk of transmitting COVID-19 to athletes, coaches, and the general community, and should be avoided at this time.
- As the epidemiology of COVID-19 around the country and the state of Michigan evolves, MDHHS will review its recommendation that contact sports should be avoided.
- Lower rates of transmission may allow individuals to participate in contact sports more safely in the future.
- CDC or MDHHS guidance should be adhered to for sports teams/clubs and facilities that are continuing to operate.

Contact Sports and Risk of COVID-19 Transmission

Counties around the country have faced outbreaks of COVID-19 associated with sports teams. In August, Michigan had more than 36 reported outbreaks associated with athletics clubs, teams or athletic facilities. The largest of those outbreaks included 27 affected individuals. Outbreaks of this magnitude have the potential to affect more than just a sports team, but the community in which the players and coaches reside as well.

Contact sports, meaning sports involving more than occasional and fleeting contact, pose a 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: football, basketball, rugby, field hockey, soccer, lacrosse, wrestling, hockey, boxing, futsal and martial arts with opponents.

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.

Given the available epidemiological data and the timing as many schools and universities return to campus, contact sports pose a high risk of disease transmission to athletes, coaches and the general community, and should be avoided at this time.

As the epidemiology of COVID-19 around the country and the state of Michigan evolves, MDHHS will continue to review this recommendation. Lower rates of transmission may allow for contact sports to resume safely in the future. At the current juncture, the resumption of contact sports will create a risk of outbreaks among players and place coaches, family members and community members at increased risk.

Mitigation Measures

Even when competitions are not held, teams may meet and practice in a way that is socially distanced and addresses concerns arising from close contacts. In these contexts, and in contexts where sports teams/clubs and facilities continue to compete, MDHHS recommends the following behaviors to reduce risk of disease transmission:

- **Adjusting the level and intensity of physical activity and taking frequent rest breaks can improve toleration of a face covering.**
 - If a cloth face covering 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 covering or a plastic face shield, then the athlete should make adjustments to the activity that would maintain distancing of 6 feet or more (individual practice rather than game play, for example).
- Enforce hand washing and the covering of coughs and sneezes at all times.
- 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.
- 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.

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

- <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

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.