Q: How can youth sports continue safely during the COVID pandemic?
A: Several guidelines have been developed to keep youth safe in sports during the COVID pandemic:
- Youth and coaches should follow cloth face masking, spacing, and hand hygiene guidelines developed by the CDC (Center for Disease Control) and MIAA (Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association).
- All youth athletes should have updated preparticipation sports physicals completed within 13 months of participation.
- Athletes who are experiencing any symptoms or have been a close contact of a COVID-positive individual should stay home from practices or games and notify their coaches and school.
- Follow game modification guidance by MIAA.
- Avoid cheering, shouting, and singing when closer than 8 feet from others.
- Avoid sharing sports equipment, drink and food. Store personal equipment 6 feet away from your teammates’ equipment.
- Follow rules for bench seating and avoid group huddles.
- Spectators must follow league and MIAA rules.
- Follow MIAA, league, and district transportation guidance.

Q: When should face masks be worn?
A: Face masks covering both the nose and mouth must be worn by all participants during active play, except:
- During swimming, water polo, and other water sports.
- In low-risk sports when a distance OVER 14 ft is consistently maintained between athletes during active play or performance (e.g. singles tennis, runners >14 feet away from each other).
All participants must wear masks while in huddles, in time-outs, on the sidelines or on the bench. Athletes may take “mask breaks” when distant from other players, coaches, and spectators.

Q: If a youth athlete becomes infected with COVID, when can they return to organized sports?
A: All youth who have had a positive COVID test must be cleared by their pediatric health care provider team before returning to sports, and must follow a gradual return to play (GRTP) schedule, which lasts at least 7 days.
- Youth with asymptomatic illness (a positive COVID-19 test with no symptoms) or with mild COVID-19 illness (including fever [oral >100.4°F] for 3 days or less, fatigue, loss of smell/taste, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, cough, congestion, sore throat) may begin a GRTP only after: 1) contacting their pediatric health care provider teams for a clearance visit, 2) 10 days have passed since their positive COVID tests, and 3) they have been symptom free for at least 24 hours.
- Youth with moderate COVID-19 illness (including persistent fever [oral >100.4°F] for more than 3 days, chills, body aches, loss of smell/taste, significant lethargy/fatigue, cough, hypoxia, pneumonia, shortness of breath, chest pain, chest tightness) may begin a GRTP after being at least 10 days symptom free and after seeing a pediatric health care provider or pediatric cardiologist.
- Youth with severe COVID-19 illness, those who required ICU hospitalization, had abnormal cardiac testing during the acute infection, or had multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) may not exercise for at least 3-6 months and must be cleared by a cardiologist.

Q: Where can I find other resources?
A: See below for links to guidance from various organizations.
- mass.gov: https://bit.ly/2Lg8HYa
- MIAA/DESE: https://bit.ly/3rKAxwC
- HealthyChildren.org: https://bit.ly/2LaMzP4