

FAQs About Youth Sports and COVID

Participating in sports allows youth to improve their cardiovascular health, strength, body composition, and overall fitness. Mentally, youth benefit from the increased socialization with friends and coaches as well as from the return to a more structured routine. These psychological and physical benefits can help support their developmental growth. Exercise also has immune system benefits. — AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics) Dec 2020

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>



AAP
<https://bit.ly/2JFusQZ>



HealthyChildren.org
<https://bit.ly/2LaMzP4>



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