

Workplace Safety & Prevention Services Guidance on Health and Safety for the Sports Sector during COVID-19

OVERVIEW

During the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak, we all need to do our part to keep workers, customers and the public safe and healthy so we can stop the spread and prepare to reopen the province, when we are ready.

Below is a set of resources, tips and best practices to help employers and employees prevent the spread of COVID-19 and work together to reopen the province.

Employers and workers in Ontario have certain duties and rights under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)* and its regulations. Employers should also review and follow any applicable directives and guidance coming from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Ministry of Health.

Learn more about:

- [workers' rights](#)
- [employers' responsibilities](#)
- [Duties of Employers and Other Persons](#)

BEST PRACTICES

We know that every workplace is unique which makes it so important that every workplace assess functions carried out by their workforce to ensure they take action to protect against the hazards presented by exposure to COVID-19.

Practicing physical distancing (staying 2 metres away from others), minimizing contact with droplets of mucous or saliva, keeping hands, surfaces and objects clean, and preventing contact with potentially infected people – are all critically important measures. Other information on how you can protect yourself is available on ontario.ca/coronavirus.

We have provided some recommendations below for your consideration. Please keep in mind that introducing any new protective measures should be done as part of a full review of other workplace hazards - not just COVID-19. Employers should consult with Joint Health and Safety Committees/Health and Safety Representatives on measures to protect workers in the workplace.

Some workplaces may already have some existing controls in place that may help reduce the risk of exposure to workers, so regular 'check-ins' on the effectiveness of controls is highly recommended.

RECOGNIZE HAZARDS AND ASSESS RISK

For Owners, Managers, Coaches, Scouts, Trainers, Therapists, Officials, and other Sport Sector Workers, we recognize that the nature of the work you do may involve contact with co-workers and players/customers (i.e. within 2 metres). These interactions, as well as the need to touch work surfaces and equipment could increase the risk that you or your players/customers could come in contact with the virus.

Take a look at where you might minimize those risks within your workplace. People who are sick or have signs of illness (e.g. fever, coughing, runny nose, tiredness, shortness of breath) [should self-isolate](#). Consult [public health information](#) to learn more about the symptoms of COVID-19 infection. Recognize and report these hazards and use appropriate controls. Ensure that you or your co-workers stay home if you or they have symptoms.

Take a look at the controls below to see how they may assist you.

CONTROLS

All existing safety, sanitation, and infection control standards established by licensing agencies and public health authorities are still in effect and enforced. Already existing controls may help to reduce the risk of exposure for workers (e.g. following practices required by the Local/Provincial Health Unit). In addition, refer to national or provincial sports bodies who may have issued further guidance for sports-specific issues and control measures.

To protect yourself from some of the risks of exposure to COVID-19, consider the following:

Keep Informed and Communicate

- Screen players/customers and staff regularly for health issues. This may include reminders to players/customers on websites and via telephone messages. If anyone develops symptoms of COVID-19, implement procedures for reporting the illness and keeping them away from others. For further guidance on screening procedures, consult the [Ministry of Health](#).
- Update your business's voicemail, email, social media, website and other external communications to inform customers of changes to the business operations related to COVID 19 protocol.
- Create a COVID-19 safety plan to put into place the controls to make the workplace safer for everyone. Talk to your workers and your Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) members or health and safety representatives, if any, for their input on the plan. Share the plan with all workplace parties when it is done. This will help ensure your workers and customers/players/others understand how you plan to manage the risks of exposure to COVID-19. Review, evaluate and update your plan regularly. For more information to help create your safety plan, refer to <https://www.ontario.ca/covidsafety> and the [WSPS Pandemic Playbook](#).
- Communicate that it is not permitted for anyone to enter the business or recreational/sport area if individuals have symptoms of COVID-19. For example, install clear signage throughout the workplace (indoor or outdoor), including the points of entry.
- Ensure that illness [reporting requirements](#) that may be required by the local public health unit and the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development are well communicated in the workplace through training and signage. People who are sick or have signs of illness (e.g. fever, coughing, runny nose, tiredness, shortness of breath) [must self-isolate](#), notify their employer and call a doctor or healthcare provider.
- Create a pandemic travel protocol, if travel is required, to ensure safety when working in different areas. The pandemic travel protocol should contain advice that is consistent with [Government of Canada recommendations regarding travel](#) during COVID-19.
- Provide clear information and instructions to your workers. Make sure they know what they need to do to protect themselves and others. Ensure they know how to follow the work and hygiene practices outlined in your plan, including all new safety measures. Train workers on possible COVID-19 transmission points in the workplace, what steps are being taken to protect them, and how they can protect themselves. This includes frequent hand washing especially before and after each player/customer interaction, sanitizing items and surfaces more frequently, following equipment disinfection procedures, and not touching their face.
- Follow all municipal and [local public health warnings](#), directions and recommendations related to COVID-19. Consider regular times to check in with public health updates and retrain/revise practices as needed.
- Share information in all languages spoken by your workers, if possible. Provide information in ways that are easy to understand, like graphics and pictures, and use resources from the Ontario government. Find posters and pictograms at WSPS. [WSPS Essential Sector Posters](#) are also available.
- Ensure that measures you decide on are well communicated.

Eliminate or Minimize Exposure

Physical Distancing

- Install physical distancing markers throughout the facility (e.g. training/locker room areas, benches), including the entrance area outside the premises to ensure a physical distance of 2 metres is maintained.

- Limit the number of workers working in one space so that they can distance themselves from each other by:
 - Staggering shifts and break times and scheduling more time for frequent cleaning to that disinfection takes place prior to and after each use of equipment and commonly used work surfaces.
 - Practicing physical distancing during breaks.
 - Have workstations or chairs positioned to maintain the physical distance, where possible.
- Consider installing transparent hard plastic barriers where physical distancing is not an option (for example between chairs or workstations, or at other equipment, and warm up areas.)
- Limit nonessential visitors, spectators, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations.

Disinfection and Sanitizing

- Maintain clean work stations, debit machines, cash registers, lockers, counters, equipment, etc.
- Provide hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes for players/customers to use upon entry. Consider having them available near the entryway, waiting and locker areas, and other high-traffic areas.
- Provide a safe place for individuals to dispose of used sanitizing wipes and disposable protective equipment. Empty and clean waste containers on a regular basis.
- Surfaces that come in contact with players/customers must be disinfected prior to and after each use.
- Disinfect often frequently touched surfaces and common areas, such as entrances, counters, benches, locker/change rooms, washrooms, etc.
- Clean and disinfect equipment (bats, balls, gymnastics equipment, etc.) that may be shared between players and staff. Public Health Ontario offers more information on [clean and disinfect](#) protocols.

Hand Hygiene

- Ensure all hand-washing facilities are available and in good working order. Proper handwashing is key.
- Train workers on the proper hand washing technique and remind workers to avoid touching their face. Extra handwashing is a good idea for everyone – and when that’s not possible, a hand sanitizer with minimum alcohol content of 60% should be used frequently.
- Workers and players/customers should sanitize/ [wash their hands](#) before entering the facility, after contact with others, or with surfaces others have touched.
- Workers should practice handwashing before breaks, at shift changes, after making or receiving deliveries etc. Keep an adequate supply of soap, paper towels, etc.
- Communicate proper cough and sneeze etiquette through the use of posted reminders and other communications.

Players, Customers and Visitors

- Consider taking players, customers or visitors by appointment only and book online and by phone only, restricting walk-in visits.
- Consider limiting the number of people in your premises if unable to maintain physical distancing. The provincial guidelines on gathering numbers during COVID-19 should be consulted.
- Have customers pre-pay by electronic options; if this isn’t possible [clean and disinfect](#) payment devices between customers.
- Avoid using waiting areas inside your business. If that is not possible, consider proper signage/markings to support physical distancing or physical barriers and consider removing chairs from the waiting area.
- Remove books, pens and other frequently touched items from any waiting or reception areas.
- Do not distribute snacks and beverages to players/customers and encourage players/customers to supply their own.
- Where possible, assign workers to ensure staff and players are utilizing sanitizing materials, following physical distancing protocols.
- Eliminate restrictions and penalties on cancellations to encourage players/customers to reschedule if they are feeling unwell.

Other Control Measures

- Assign each worker a unique set of tools or equipment for their use only and ensure they or designated person(s) with the team are responsible for cleaning and disinfecting it. If this is not possible, limit the number of people sharing equipment or tools.
- Conduct work/sport in outdoor spaces, where possible, and/or ventilate spaces by opening doors.
- Ensure any protective coverings are discarded (disposable) or changed (washable) between players/customers; care should be taken to avoid contamination of surfaces when removing/changing used protective coverings.
- For any soiled towels, sheets, uniforms, laundry etc., minimize shaking and disturbance; if possible, arrange to ensure the laundering of items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely. Clean and disinfect hampers or other carts for transporting laundry and sanitation equipment.
- If using a third-party cleaning service, ensure they are up-to-date with the latest COVID-19 prevention knowledge and are following safe practices.

In addition to the above recommendations, employers should determine whether personal protective equipment (PPE)* needs to be part of their hazard control plan. The need for PPE should be based on a risk assessment that may take into consideration input from the local public health unit. Although proper use of PPE can help prevent some exposures, it should not take the place of other control measures.

*NOTE: Please be reminded that face coverings (non-medical masks) do not constitute PPE and are not an appropriate substitute for physical distancing in the workplace.

To learn more about PPE as well as face coverings, please refer to these sections in the Guide to Developing your Workplace COVID-19 Safety Plan on [Ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca) or see the [WSPS Pandemic Playbook](#).

POTENTIAL CASE OF, OR SUSPECTED EXPOSURE TO, COVID-19 AT YOUR WORKPLACE

There are steps that you will need to take if one of your workers has symptoms which may be related to COVID-19, or is diagnosed with COVID-19. For information regarding what to do, please refer to the information available on <https://www.ontario.ca/>

EVALUATION

COVID-19 has presented all of us with challenges we have never seen before. It's important to consider that any of the adjustments we are making today, may need further adjustment tomorrow.

It is recommended that you take a look at your preventative measures on an ongoing basis, and adjust them if they are not working well enough or causing other issues with your work. For example, if you decided to use goggles, but they are impeding your vision, or are making other tasks unnecessarily difficult, you may want to try a face shield instead. Or, if you decided you needed a certain kind of disinfectant that is no longer available, identifying alternative disinfecting products or solutions or switching to soap and water practices may be reasonable substitutes.

Bottom line? Plan to make regular check-ins and adjustments part of *your* COVID-19 infection prevention plans.

*For anyone who thinks they may have been exposed to or are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, please start by visiting the Ministry of Health website and taking a [self-assessment](#).

RESOURCES

Stay updated with daily government updates:

- [Government of Ontario](#)
- [Government of Canada](#)
- [Public Health Ontario](#)

Ontario government and agency-issued resources about COVID-19

The [Ontario Ministry of Health](#) is providing consistent updates on the provincial government's response to the outbreak, including:

- status of cases in Ontario
- current affected areas
- symptoms and treatments
- how to protect yourself and self-isolate
- updated Ontario news on the virus

[Public Health Ontario](#) is providing up-to-date resources on COVID-19, including:

- links to evolving public health guidelines, position statements and situational updates
- synopsis of key articles updating on the latest findings related to the virus
- recommendations for use of personal protective equipment
- information on infection prevention and control
- testing information
- other public resources

The Ontario government is supporting employers by setting up a portal to assist them in finding supplies and equipment through the [Workplace PPE Supplier Directory](#).

OTHER COVID-19 RESOURCES

[Health Canada](#) outlines the actions being taken by the Government of Canada to limit spread of the virus, as well as what is happening in provinces and communities across the country. It also maintains a live update of the number of cases by province.

The [World Health Organization](#) is updating the latest guidance and information related to the global outbreak and spread beyond Canadian borders.

It also provides the most up-to-date information on:

- current research and development around the virus
- a COVID-19 situation "dashboard"
- emergency preparedness measures
- live media updates on the spread of the virus

This resource does not replace the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) and its regulations and should not be used as or considered legal advice. Health and safety inspectors apply the law based on the facts in the workplace.

For more information visit www.wsps.ca/COVID19

NOTE: This document is intended for informational purposes only to provide an overview of the potential hazards posed in the workplace due to COVID-19. It is not intended as medical advice, to provide a comprehensive risk assessment for all workplaces, or to replace any legislated workplace safety obligations. WSPS has not endorsed and does not endorse any particular product or company as a solution to the risk presented by COVID-19. Due to the ongoing evolution of the situation in Ontario and around the world, this document may be used as a guide for Employers in addition to guidance delivered by public health authorities such as the World Health Organization (WHO), Ontario Ministry of Health, Public Health Ontario and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Any use which is made of this document by any Employer or individual, or any reliance on or decisions to be made based on it, are the responsibility of the Employer or individual. WSPS and its partners, officers, directors, employees, agents, representatives, suppliers and service providers accept no responsibility for any errors or omissions in content or for damages of any kind or nature suffered by any Employer or any third party as a result of use of or reliance on this communication.