

RETURN TO ORGANIZED YOUTH SPORTS

10 QUESTIONS FAMILIES CAN ASK ABOUT COVID-19 SAFETY



Youth sports have started and stopped during the COVID-19 pandemic. As some organizations make plans to resume play, below are questions that parents/caregivers can ask themselves or their child's sports provider, 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](#). Find youth sports COVID-19 policies for every state [here](#). **If your youth sport organization is not following local guidance, your child should not return to play.**

1. Is my child 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, diabetes 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, preparations for training, 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](#). 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.

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.

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.

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. If my child is playing indoors, what are the plans for ventilation?

Risk of transmission is greater indoors than outdoors, where the probability is lower since wind disperses viral particles. [The CDC studied an outbreak of recreational hockey players](#) and concluded that ice rinks are “likely well suited” to transmission. The CDC advises that ventilation systems or fans should operate properly, and to increase circulation of outdoor air by opening windows and doors.

8. What mask procedures are in place for my child’s program?

Assess if the program’s mask-wearing policy keeps all household members safe. [The American Academy of Pediatrics now strongly recommends masks](#) for sports participations except for swimming and diving, gymnastics, cheerleading and wrestling. Masks should also be worn on the sidelines 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.

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

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

10. What can I do to support my child’s return to play outside of organized sports?

Kids need emotional and social support, now more than ever. Observe whether your child’s coach is creating a positive environment, such as tips from our [Calls for Coaches checklist](#). If your child isn’t playing organized sports now, create informal, fun ways to get your child moving, with [ideas here from The New York Times](#). Start a bike club. Go hiking. Invent a new game. Ask your child what he or she wants to play.

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](#)

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