

## Introduction

UPMC experts have developed this document to provide answers to frequently asked questions about the Return to Sports Playbooks for youth, high school, and collegiate athletes. Here, we have provided general responses to FAQs based on our guidelines, but please understand that these answers do not constitute a one-size-fits-all approach. If you need guidance on your specific situation and do not feel that these FAQs address your concern, please contact [ReturnToSports@upmc.edu](mailto:ReturnToSports@upmc.edu) with your questions. This account is monitored, and a member of our team will respond to you within two business days.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Purpose/Enforcement of Return to Sports Guidelines

1. What are these playbooks meant to do?
  - a. We all want to get back to normal. But until there's a vaccine, and it is distributed, things will not be normal. These playbooks are meant to be guidelines, not mandates. You will need to adapt these to fit your site/circumstances to lower, not eliminate, the risk of illness among athletes and staff.
2. Who will enforce these guidelines?
  - a. Everyone on the team has a responsibility to help enforce these guidelines. COVID-19 is a public health problem, so we all have to give our all. Trust and creativity are two key factors here. Everyone wants to play without illness, so we have to get creative about how we do it and trust that everyone is following the guidelines for their fellow teammates.
3. Can the guidelines change?
  - a. These guidelines are subject to change as the regional, national and global health situation progresses. The playbooks were created to be considered and followed, while flexible enough to fit each organization's needs as circumstances adapt and change.
4. What education should be provided to athletes/staff/parents?
  - a. Signage and overall education will be key. Check with your school/organization, as well as a team physician or athletic trainer, about COVID-19/hygiene/social distancing signage to serve as a reminder in high-traffic areas, as well as educational resources for parents/guardians who are concerned about sending their athlete to practice.

### Cost/Logistics

5. Will this affect our school/organization finances?
  - a. Implementing these necessary safety measures will likely affect your finances. Additional travel measures (housing and meals), cleaning supplies, PPE, thermometers, and increase in payroll for additional cleaning hours are just some of the additional costs to be considered.
6. How will we handle "pay to play" with many families struggling?
  - a. Organizations may have to make difficult decisions on a case-by-case basis. Those who cannot cover the costs to play via the participants or organization may have to take the season off, although some charitable organizations may be willing to help.
7. What if a school administration is not on board with these guidelines?
  - a. While these guidelines are not being legally enforced, we strongly recommend walking through them with any administration that is unsure of implementing them to show how these guidelines can help

reduce the spread of COVID-19 while getting athletes back to the sports they love. There are many benefits to returning to play, as long as it is done safely and smartly.

8. Do you recommend organizations use a waiver for returning to sports?
  - a. While some schools are requiring a COVID-19 return to play waiver, we are not including that in our recommendations. We suggest you consult your school's/organization's legal counsel on this matter.
9. How do we decide if cases in our area are increasing/decreasing, and if it's okay to play?
  - a. This information will come from local health departments, as well as county and state governments. Schools/organizations should be able to lean on each other/follow each other's lead in making collective and appropriate decisions for conferences.

### COVID-19 Testing and Screenings

10. What types of COVID-19 testing are available, and should we utilize them?
  - a. PCR, rapid diagnostic, and antibody/serology tests are all available. While PCR and rapid diagnostic tests capture whether a person has COVID-19 at that snapshot in time, antibody testing shows whether a person has ever been exposed to COVID-19. All test options are approximately \$100 per test and typically only covered by insurance if the person being tested is ill. With many options on the market, some tests are known to produce false negatives or positives. Also, having antibodies does not prove immunity to COVID-19, so testing may not be the best approach for schools/organizations with little budget to leverage.
11. Why is cardiac testing suggested for those who tested positive for COVID-19 before they return to sport?
  - a. New data out of Seattle is a concern, as there is some evidence that children with COVID-19 are experiencing myocarditis. It is known that youth can get myocarditis with viral illness, and those cardiac implications are part of the reason we are cautious about children with fever resuming activity. We recommend removing COVID-19-positive athletes from play for 14 days because of this risk. Even asymptomatic COVID-19-positive athletes should follow this guideline as a precaution.
12. Should we take temperatures of the student athletes?
  - a. Yes, we highly recommend taking the temperature of each person in a facility/group once a day. Anyone whose temperature is above 99.5°F should sit out and be evaluated before return to play.
13. Who should conduct daily screenings, and when should they happen?
  - a. You should work with your school/organization to determine when screenings will take place each day and who will conduct them. We suggest building a team who is responsible for this.
14. How should officials/referees be screened/limited?
  - a. Many games will have to be played with less officials/referees than usual, and the organization of the officials you use will have to communicate with you to address who is responsible for screening.

### Masking and Sanitization

15. Do coaches and staff need to wear masks?
  - a. Yes, everyone who is not in the game should wear a cloth face covering 100% of the time. We also highly recommend that athletes wear facemasks while practicing and competing indoors.
16. Is there a way to be sure a surface is clean once you've sanitized it?
  - a. The best method here is to follow the instructions on the sanitization material for "wet time" required to kill a virus before wiping it off. Sanitize commonly-touched surfaces diligently and often.

17. How should water bottles be handled, especially during quick timeouts?
  - a. It will not be easy, but there can be absolutely no sharing of bottles during this time. Disposable cups should be used, or athletes should be required to label a bottle that only they use. Athletic trainers should not carry several bottles onto the field and pass out to players during timeout.
18. How can cold and warm whirlpools be provided?
  - a. This may be a year where whirlpools are not possible. Home instructions can be provided to athletes for this method. Schools/organizations with larger budgets may decide if they have the resources to safely distance users and sanitize these facilities for use.

### Preseason Considerations

19. How should we handle preseason physicals?
  - a. Physicals will look different this year. For colleges, these may be performed during the 14-day initial isolation period speaking to the need to schedule and space these out. Other preseason housekeeping items can also be accomplished during this time, such as preseason concussion baseline testing, eligibility paperwork/waivers, virtual team meetings, and athlete education. Some of these can even be done from home. All organizations should consider scheduling these to ensure that only a set number of athletes are being evaluated/waiting to be evaluated at one time.
20. Who are we defining as essential personnel?
  - a. This will require taking a serious look at your team and staff and defining who absolutely needs to be present in order for the game to take place. Teams may have to make difficult decisions about not having everyone attend or dress for the game, and only having the necessary amount of people, with perhaps one backup, travel to away games.
21. How should we address group workouts?
  - a. We suggest holding small group workouts by planning groups of 10 athletes ahead of time with no crossover of groups. If someone within a group develops symptoms, the whole group should then be quarantined. The other groups will be able to continue practicing and competing.
22. How do we handle COVID-19-positive collegiate athletes kept in isolation?
  - a. We recommend housing each athlete separately, in their own rooms, and conducting frequent wellness checks via phone call, video chat, or other means of socially-distanced communication.
23. Should additional precautions be taken with travelling students returning from hotspot regions?
  - a. The 14-day quarantine philosophy still applies here. When people become infected with the COVID-19 virus, about 50% of people show symptoms at 5 days, 75-80% show symptoms at 10 days, and 100% show symptoms at 14 days. If no symptoms have appeared within 14 days, you can feel confident that that person will not bring COVID-19 to your team.
24. Should athletes in out of season sports still play/use school facilities?
  - a. Many conferences are limiting practice and play to in-season sports only, meaning that, for example, fall ball would not be possible for spring sports like baseball and softball. This will help limit the number of people crossing paths.

### Social Distancing and Travel

25. How can we social distance in locker rooms?



- a. Use of locker rooms should be scheduled/grouped with alternating times of use or closed altogether. Athletes could be required to come ready to play and shower/change at home postgame. Away teams may be restricted from using locker rooms, or another area could be designated for this purpose.
26. How can we limit the number of people coming to the athletic training room?
- a. Home athletes can be required to make an appointment to come in, while away athletes may be restricted altogether. You could still consider treating away athletes in the hallway/locker room.
27. Can we safely coordinate travel to away games?
- a. Yes, but this will require patience and cooperation from both/all teams. Each team should develop guidelines for when away teams visit their site.
28. How should we appropriately social distance while travelling to games?
- a. If you are taking a bus, our recommendation is that everyone should be able to fit with one athlete per row. If this is not possible, athletes who are able to be driven by parents/guardians should do so.
29. Will tournaments be able to happen?
- a. If enough facilities are available to allow appropriate social distancing for warmup and competition, tournaments will be possible. There will have to be guidelines around where on-deck teams should wait and how many nonessential visitors are permitted to avoid crowds. Time should be scheduled between matches to allow previous teams to exit and new teams to enter, and extra precaution must be taken for indoor sports since space is even more limited.
30. If an athlete develops symptoms at an away contest and parents/guardians are not there to take home and isolate, should they ride the bus home with the team?
- a. No, the athlete should not return to any common area around others. There will have to be a plan in place for this situation where the school provides individual transportation back home for the ill athlete. Masking should also be in place for the athlete and driver.