

## All Sports Policy

Answers to the following frequently asked questions (FAQs) will help schools and other sports organizers understand and follow [sports guidelines](#) from the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH).

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### 1. Should masks be worn for all sports played indoors?

Yes. However, participants may need to remove masks under certain circumstances, such as when wearing a mask poses an undue risk of injury during certain sports. The [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) (AAP) recommends participants not wear masks for competitive cheerleading (tumbling/stunting/flying) and gymnastics (while on the different apparatuses) because of the theoretical risk that the mask may get caught on objects and become a choking hazard or accidentally impair vision. AAP also recommends participants not wear masks during wrestling contact where masks could become a choking hazard, unless an adult coach or official is closely monitoring for safety purposes. Participants should also not wear masks during water sports because a wet mask may be more difficult to breathe through, according to the AAP. If other sport-specific scenarios arise in which a face mask may obstruct a participant’s view or become a choking hazard, sports organizers should use their discretion to determine whether risk of mask use outweighs risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission.

### 2. Should masks be worn only during gameplay?

[Executive Order 2021-18](#) requires all individuals, regardless of vaccination status, to wear a mask while indoors at public and nonpublic schools serving students from prekindergarten through grade



12 (P-12). The IDPH sports guidelines further require that masks be worn indoors during all youth recreational sports. This includes during gameplay and during sports-related activities that do not occur during gameplay, such as on the sideline or bench, in the locker room, during team meetings, in the weight room, on the team bus or when carpooling, or during meals, especially when eating indoors. (Individuals may remove masks when eating or drinking indoors but should do so while maintaining physical distancing to extent possible, at a recommended distance of 6 feet from others).

As recommended by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) and [AAP](#), individuals who are not fully vaccinated are encouraged to wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated, particularly in areas of [substantial to high transmission](#). This recommendation applies to all group training and competition and during sports-related contacts with other unvaccinated individuals that do not occur during gameplay, such as on the sideline or bench, in the locker room, during team meetings, in the weight room, on the team bus or when carpooling, or during meals, especially when eating indoors.

### **3. Who do these guidelines apply to?**

IDPH sports guidelines apply to athletes aged 18 years or younger participating in youth recreational sports, including, but not limited to, school-based sports (high school and elementary school), travel clubs, private leagues and clubs, recreational leagues and centers, and park district sports programs. The guidelines also apply to coaches, trainers, officials, volunteers, and other adults involved in youth sports activities.

### **4. How are sports categorized as “high-risk” or “low-risk”?**

IDPH sports guidelines no longer categorize sports as “higher-risk,” “moderate-risk,” or “lower-risk” for the purposes of COVID-19 prevention strategies. In its [guidance for preventing COVID-19 in K-12 schools](#), CDC makes different recommendations for screening testing for students involved in “low- and intermediate-risk sports” and those involved in “high-risk sports and extracurricular activities.” Schools can use the following information from the CDC to help determine screening testing schedules for youth athletes based on sport: “Examples of low-risk sports are diving and golf; intermediate-risk sport examples are baseball and cross country; high-risk sport examples are football and wrestling. High-risk extracurricular activities are those in which increased exhalation occurs, such as activities that involve singing, shouting, band, or exercise, especially when conducted indoors.”

### **5. When should spectators wear masks?**

All spectators, regardless of vaccination status, should wear a mask in attendance at indoor youth sports events and must wear a mask if the event is held indoors in a public or nonpublic P-12 school setting. For outdoor youth sports events, spectators who are not fully vaccinated should wear a mask when unable to maintain recommended physical distance of at least 6 feet from non-household members or when the event is held in a community with [substantial to high transmission](#) (see [Question 6](#) below for more information). Spectators who are fully vaccinated may attend outdoor



youth sports events without wearing a mask, though they may choose to do so in crowded settings or if they or someone in their household is immunocompromised.

**6. How can sports organizers determine what level of transmission is occurring in their community or the community where they will be playing?**

Sports organizers can review data from the [CDC](#) or [IDPH](#) to find recent information on the number of new COVID-19 cases per 100,000 population in the previous week. CDC defines community transmission as low, moderate, substantial, or high as follows:

	Low Transmission (blue)	Moderate Transmission (yellow)	Substantial Transmission (orange)	High Transmission (red)
Total new cases per 100,000 persons in the past 7 days	0-9.99	10-49.99	50-99.99	≥ 100

Sports organizers can also contact their [local health departments](#) for more information and guidance to assess local public health conditions.

**7. What should sports organizers do if playing in communities with high transmission of COVID-19?**

To protect in-person learning at school, CDC recommends the following in its [guidance to prevent COVID-19 in K-12 settings](#) (see “Screening Testing”): “High-risk sports and extracurricular activities should be virtual or canceled in areas of high community transmission unless all participants are fully vaccinated.”

**8. How can testing be used to support participation in sports activities?**

To facilitate safer participation in sports, the CDC recommends sports organizers implement screening testing for participants who are not fully vaccinated. Screening testing can be critical to identifying asymptomatic cases needed to interrupt SARS-CoV-2 transmission. This is especially important when community risk or transmission levels are substantial or high. Individuals should be tested for COVID-19 as close as possible to competition and, preferably, within 24 hours before sporting activities or competition. For more information on screening testing, review IDPH answers to [frequently asked questions \(FAQs\) on COVID-19 testing in schools](#) and the [CDC guidance for COVID-19 prevention in K-12 schools](#) (see “Screening Testing”).

**9. Who should be tested for COVID-19 before competing in sports?**

CDC and IDPH recommend routine COVID-19 screening testing for all individuals who are not fully vaccinated and who come into contact with others during youth sports activities, including youth participants, coaches, trainers, officials, volunteers, and other adults involved in youth sports. Coaches, trainers, officials, and other adults involved in youth sports activities should



test for COVID-19 at least once per week, regardless of community transmission. CDC recommends that participants test for COVID-19 at least once per week in communities with low or moderate transmission and at least twice per week in communities with substantial transmission.

**10. Can sports teams travel for competition?**

Yes. Individuals may engage in sports-related activities for all sports without restrictions on travel. IDPH recommends that before traveling for sports activities, teams review the most recent data on [county-level transmission across Illinois](#) or [in other states](#). If playing outside of Illinois, teams should avoid travel to areas of higher risk as recommended in the [IDPH Travel Guidance](#).

**11. Can sports teams conduct tournaments?**

Yes. There is no limit on the number of teams in competition or attendance.