

Risk Assessment and Mitigation Tool for Recreational Activities in Manitoba Operating During the COVID-19 Pandemic:

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Manitoba closed or restricted many recreational activities. As Manitoba begins to lift or adjust restrictive public health measures, it is important that those responsible for recreational activities consider the possible risks and identify and implement risk mitigation measures when re-opening or operating during the COVID-19 pandemic. Use this tool along with relevant provincial and national activity-specific guidance (e.g. sports or arts organizations).

Public health measures taken by participants, organizers and operators for recreational activities are part of Manitoba's collective approach to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19. There is currently preliminary evidence suggesting that the risk of COVID-19 transmission is greater in indoor compared to outdoor settings. Although the risk of COVID-19 transmission in outdoor settings is thought to be lower, there is still some risk of transmission.

This tool is based on concepts outlined in the guidance developed for community-based measures titled: ***Community-Based Measures to Mitigate the Spread of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in Canada***. It reflects the currently available scientific evidence and expert opinion and is subject to change as new information on transmissibility, epidemiology, and effectiveness of public health and risk mitigation measures becomes available.

Risk Assessment

What are the COVID-19 risks associated recreational activities?

The following facts about COVID-19 and associated questions can help you consider the risks of COVID-19 for participants and spectators.

The risk level is affected by whether there is COVID-19 activity in the local community. If there is known COVID-19 activity in your community, the likelihood that it could be introduced to participants of recreational activities is higher. The risk of COVID-19 introduction and spread is also presumed to be greater if a higher proportion of individuals visiting the indoor/outdoor spaces or participating in the activity comes from outside of your community and/or is coming from a community with higher rates of COVID-19.

COVID-19 spreads from person to person, most commonly through respiratory droplets (e.g., generated by coughing, sneezing, singing or talking) during close interactions (i.e., within two metres/six feet). People who have COVID-19 may have few to no symptoms, or symptoms may be mild.

Consider the following when planning recreational activities.

- Do participants interact with many other people while using the indoor/outdoor space or during the activity? A higher number of interactions with others carries greater risk.
- Do participants interact closely (two metres/six feet) with others while in the indoor/outdoor space or during the activity? Closer interactions carry greater risk than interactions at a distance.
- Do participants have prolonged close interactions with others while in the indoor/outdoor space or during the activity (e.g., team sports, martial arts, boxing, musicians in a group setting)? Prolonged contact is defined as lasting for more than 10 minutes of time being less than two metres away, and may be cumulative (i.e., over multiple interactions). Evidence indicates that person-to-person spread is more likely with prolonged contact.
- Is the indoor/outdoor space or recreational activity crowded (e.g., high density of people) on a regular basis? A crowded setting is presumed to have greater risk.
- Do any interactions occur in enclosed/cramped indoor spaces (e.g., use of restrooms, use of locker/dressing rooms for changing for an activity or sport)? Being in a confined indoor space carries a greater risk.
- Are participants singing? Is this in a group setting? There is some preliminary evidence that this is a higher-risk activity.
- Can you maintain lists of participants for 21 days to ensure appropriate public health follow-up can take place if a participant be exposed to COVID-19 during these activities?

COVID-19 can also be spread through touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands.

- Do participants frequently have contact with high-touch surfaces (i.e. surfaces frequently touched by others)? A higher number of contacts with high-touch surfaces (e.g. shared recreation equipment, climbing structures, restroom facilities, handrails, floor mats, shared instruments or props) is presumed to have greater risk.
- Are facilities available where participants can wash and/or sanitize their hands after contact with high-touch surfaces (e.g., access to hand hygiene stations/supplies)?

COVID-19 can cause more severe illness among people who are 60 and over, and those who have compromised immune systems or other underlying medical conditions (underlying medical conditions could include: heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, lung disease, cancer).

- Are there participants or spectators who may be at higher risk of severe illness?

COVID-19 spread can be reduced by consistently practicing personal protective practices.

- Are participants able to follow hygiene practices such as washing hands frequently, respiratory etiquette (coughing into one's arm/sleeve), and identifying when they are feeling ill and staying home?

Risk Mitigation

How can COVID-19 risks be mitigated in indoor/outdoor recreational activities?

To prevent or limit the spread of COVID-19 during recreational activities, consider the following risk mitigation principles and measures.

The most effective risk mitigation measures are those that involve separating people from each other or shared surfaces through physical distancing and physical barriers. Measures that are less effective but still offer protection when followed, rely on individuals to consistently follow personal preventive practices (e.g., use of personal protective equipment, wearing non-medical masks).

To maximize safety, use a "layered" approach with multiple measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread, including decreasing the number of interactions with others and increasing the safety of interactions. Layering of multiple mitigation measures strengthens the risk mitigation potential overall.

The following examples of risk mitigation measures are provided for your consideration. The following list is not exhaustive – you are encouraged to find creative and adaptive ways to mitigate risk in your setting that align with public health advice.

People who are ill should NOT participate in or be spectators of recreational activities.

- Post [signage](#) to discourage individuals who are ill from accessing the activity space or participating in the recreational activity.
- Ask participants if they have symptoms of COVID-19. Use Manitoba's online [screening tool](#)** before the start of the activity, and direct individuals who are ill or have symptoms of COVID-19 to not participate or spectate.
- Require participants (players, employees, coaches) and spectators to stay at home if they have any symptoms until criteria to discontinue isolation have been met, in consultation with the local public health authority or their healthcare provider.

Promote and facilitate personal protective practices.

Everyone plays a part in making recreational activities safer.

- Keep participants informed about public health advice applicable to your setting or activity.
- Promote personal health practices, including frequent hand hygiene, or foot hygiene when participants are barefoot (e.g. judo), avoidance of touching the face, and proper respiratory etiquette.

- ❑ All clothing, uniforms and gear should be washed/cleaned/disinfected between each use. Avoid sharing between participants whenever possible.
- ❑ Frequently clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces (e.g. handles, benches, equipment between use). Provide sanitizing wipes that participants can use to wipe down surfaces.
- ❑ Provide increased access to hygiene facilities (e.g. by placing alcohol-based hand sanitizer or hand-washing stations in prominent locations) and ensure accessibility for participants with disabilities or other accommodation needs.

Promote physical distancing (keeping a distance of two metres/six feet from others), which is one of the most effective ways to reduce the spread of illness.

- ❑ Focus on aspects of your activity or sport in which it is possible to maintain physical distancing (e.g. individual skill building).
- ❑ Discourage or prohibit the presence of spectators wherever reasonably possible.
- ❑ Limit the number of participants and spectators, as allowed in Manitoba, in indoor/outdoor spaces to prevent overcrowding.
- ❑ Provide [signage](#) at indoor and outdoor spaces reminding users of physical distancing requirements (e.g. two metre/six feet separation between individuals and households).
- ❑ Create appropriate spacing in areas where people would congregate (e.g. line ups, spacing of players sitting on benches).
- ❑ Modify indoor and/or outdoor spaces to promote physical distancing (e.g., convert narrow hallways or walkways to “one-way” to facilitate physical distancing).
- ❑ Use visual cues to promote appropriate spacing (e.g. floor markers for “one-way” flow of person traffic, spacing markers on spectator stands for organized activities).
- ❑ Consider closing or modifying non-essential indoor spaces (e.g., close locker rooms and have participants change clothes and shower at home).
- ❑ Restrict occupant capacity of indoor spaces such as restrooms and change rooms (e.g., close stalls to manage volume/occupancy without enforcing).
- ❑ Consider smaller league/team sizes/smaller groups of participants whenever possible (e.g. smaller groups of musicians practicing as opposed to a full orchestra).

Mitigate risks from exposure to high-touch surfaces (e.g., surfaces frequently touched by others).

- ❑ Limit the use of shared equipment during recreational activities. Any shared equipment should be cleaned between use (baseball bat, drumsticks).
- ❑ Increase frequency of environmental cleaning, especially of high-touch surfaces that continue to be accessed (e.g. water fountains, handrails, floor mats).
- ❑ If restrooms and/or showers are available, limit number of users at a given time, maintain handwashing supplies, increase cleaning and disinfecting frequency and install no-touch garbage bins.

- ❑ Consider increasing access to temporary alcohol-based hand hygiene stations/ supplies. Children may need supervision to ensure effective hand hygiene is performed.

Mitigate risks during programming.

- ❑ Consider the type of activity and the spectrum of risk. Sports with less potential for physical contact (e.g., tennis) are presumed to carry less risk, whereas sports with more potential for contact (e.g., football, basketball) are presumed to carry more risk. Performing arts that involve close physical contact between participants or have a larger number of participants also carry more risk.
 - Consider modifying the activity to reduce contact risk (e.g. no contact rules or focus on practices/skill development instead of games, minimize close contact and the number of participants in performing arts activities).
 - Consult COVID-19 specific guidelines published by the leading authorities in your activity that can assist your risk mitigation strategy for person to person interactions.
- ❑ Organizers should consider the developmental stage and ability of participants when implementing mitigation measures for programs.
- ❑ Consider smaller participant groups and stagger them, if possible, to decrease the opportunity for close contact.
- ❑ Separate participants by two metres/six feet at all times, as much as possible.
- ❑ Consider engaging community members, staff, or parents of participants to:
 - Monitor physical distancing between coaches, participants and spectators. Monitors can remind individuals to maintain their distance; and
 - Ask participants, coaches and spectators if they have symptoms of COVID-19 before the start of the activity, and direct individuals who are ill or have symptoms of COVID-19 to not attend/participate. Encourage them to use Manitoba's COVID-19 [online screening tool](#).
- ❑ Limit the use of shared equipment during activities and clean and disinfect equipment after each use.
- ❑ Wash or sanitize hands before and following the activity, especially following contact with shared equipment.
- ❑ Require that each participant consumes only their own water and food (this may mean bringing multiple water bottles and hydrating before the activity).
- ❑ Participants should be encouraged to change at home and come ready for practice/ participation in their activity (e.g., bring their own water bottle and towel).
- ❑ Ensure parents and spectators practice physical distancing.
- ❑ Discourage or prohibit the presence of spectators wherever reasonably possible.
- ❑ Eliminate team huddles and the beginning and end of game fist-bump /handshake routines.
- ❑ In the event that a participant requires first aid, consider having a family member attend to the injured. If not possible, the first aider should use appropriate personal

protective equipment, including medical mask, gloves, and face shield. First aid kits, gloves and medical masks should be stocked and available.

- ❑ Modify the space or activity to reduce how long participants are in contact with each other and how many participants come into contact with each other.
- ❑ Close or restrict access to non-essential features or common areas that encourage people to gather (e.g., locker rooms except for washroom access).
- ❑ Consider unidirectional (“one-way”) traffic on busy/narrow hallways or entrances to limit close face-to-face contact between participants and remind people to keep to their right at all times and, merge into a single file as needed.
- ❑ Stagger use of facilities for different groups to reduce number of contacts.

Mitigate risk for people at higher risk of severe illness.

- ❑ Provide special accommodations for participants from vulnerable groups (e.g. dedicated times for seniors to use the outdoor space or access the recreational activity).
- ❑ Consider increased environmental cleaning prior to use of the facilities by known vulnerable groups.

Should participants/spectators of recreational activities wear non-medical masks?

- ❑ The wearing of non-medical masks or cloth face coverings is an additional personal practice that may help to prevent the infectious respiratory droplets of an unknowingly infected person (the wearer) from coming into contact with other people and surfaces.
 - In most circumstances non-medical masks or cloth face coverings are not deemed necessary in indoor or outdoor spaces when physical distancing is possible and can be predictably maintained. However, use of these masks may be considered if physical distancing is not possible or is unpredictable, and local epidemiology and community transmission warrant it.
 - For sports where a face shield can be used (e.g. hockey), a face shield may be considered.
 - In some activities, wearing a non-medical mask may not be practical or tolerable, e.g., in activities that require physical exertion there might be a risk of poor oxygenation, easily soiled/moistened mask due to sweating/heavy breathing, or risk from injury if the mask is caught on equipment.
 - Non-medical masks should not be placed on young children under age two as they may be unable to remove the mask without assistance, which could impair their breathing.
 - Children and youth in the same activity group will have recurrent interactions with one another, much like those of family members or people in a household. For this reason, non-medical masks may not be recommended. It will be important that group sizes are small and that the same children/youth, staff and volunteers are grouped together as much as possible.

- The ability of a child/youth to complete tasks and follow direction will be dependent on a variety of factors (e.g. age, maturity, physical ability, comprehension). It will be important for child/youth staff and/or volunteers to assess ability to properly use and care for non-medical masks, based on the individuality of children/youth.
- It should be expected that some children/youth will wear non-medical masks in settings that have not adopted non-medical masks policies. Staff and volunteers should monitor for, and address, any discrimination or bullying associated with this practice (whether stigmatization is experienced by those who wear masks, and/or those who do not) and monitor for proper use.

If you choose to wear a non-medical or cloth mask, you must do the following:

- Wash your hands immediately before putting it on and immediately after taking it off.
- Practice good hand hygiene while wearing the mask.
- Ensure your mask fits well (doesn't gape).
- Do not share your mask with others.
- Face masks can become contaminated on the outside, or when touched by your hands. Avoid touching your face mask while wearing it, change your mask as soon as it is damp or soiled and place the mask directly into a bag or into the washing machine, launder your mask on a hot cycle and dry it thoroughly.