

Grassroots, Amateur and Semi-Professional Sport and COVID19

Please follow the guidance and rules on local alert levels where you live. Where grassroots sporting activities are allowed, we recommend the following principles are followed.

1. General principles

Sport is important to physical and mental wellbeing and should be encouraged where it can be done safely. This guide applies to grassroots and participatory sport. It does not include elite sports where special provision can be made to maintain COVID security – for example, access to frequent testing of players.

The same principles of infection control can be applied to sport as to other activities. These are:

- Reducing or preventing unnecessary physical contact between people – skin contact between players, coaches and others. This includes stopping handshaking, high-fives and demonstrative celebrations where there is contact between players and/or others
- Maintaining 2m physical distancing. It is helpful to consider match play, training and other associated activities separately
- Frequent handwashing, hand sanitising and showering
- Strict adherence to self-isolation for cases and contacts. No-one, including players, coaching staff and supporting adults should be allowed to attend / participate if they are symptomatic, are within 10 days of testing positive or within 14 days of being advised they are a close contact of a case. Referees, organisers and sporting associations should have zero tolerance for individuals failing to adhere to this principle.
- Prevention of poor behaviour. This includes shouting while in close proximity (2m) to other people. It applies to players, coaching staff and spectators.
- Avoiding using cramped enclosed spaces for matches or training
- Avoiding gatherings of more than 50 people (maximum two teams), including players, coaching staff, supporting adults and spectators

For the majority of sports these principles will be easy to achieve, for some sports they may require more careful consideration and for a few they may be unachievable.

Where sport is competitive the adherence of both players/teams are necessary to ensure safety.

2. Match Play

Match play is defined here to mean competitive play between separately coached individuals or teams, where contact before and after the match can be minimal.

Sports where **no physical contact can occur**. Examples include most racquet sports, most athletics disciplines, cycling, riding, shooting, bowling, golf etc. For these sports, match play can continue. Attention may need to be given to cleaning of any shared equipment.

Sports where **physical contact may occur**, but it is not integral to the game. Examples include football, hockey, squash, some athletics disciplines and other sports where the cumulative physical contact time in a match is minimal. Match play can take place, but attempt should be made by players to avoid physical contact where possible, including before, during and after the match. Referees and coaches should discourage and stop reckless behaviour that results in unnecessary physical contact.

Sports where **physical contact is integral to the game or is unavoidable**. Examples include rugby and some Gaelic sports, wrestling, boxing. Matchplay for these sports cannot be made COVID-secure at grassroots level and must cease.

Swimming and diving may continue. Pool maintenance and water sterilisation should be subject to auditable standards.

3. Training and coaching

Training is taken to include competitive play between members of the same training squad who can be assumed to have considerable contact before and after.

Individuals – training may take place in any location.

Groups (includes players, coaching and support staff).

- Non-contact training including for sports where contact is integral may take place, ideally in the open air or in a large and well ventilated hall. Efforts should be made to reduce or eliminate accidental contact and shouting amongst players and coaches.
- Contact training should be discontinued

4. Changing and showering

Wherever possible players and coaches should change at home before and after matches and training. Where changing rooms at the ground are used, they must:

- Be of sufficient size to allow 2m physical distancing between users
- Have partitioned showering facilities. Communal baths should not be used
- Provide separate facilities for separate squads
- Be cleaned effectively after every use

5. Transport

Wherever possible squads should use private cars to get too and from the ground. Car sharing should be avoided where possible unless kept to the same individuals (ie a bubble). Private minibuses and coaches may be used subject to physical distancing, the use of facemasks and keeping lists of occupants for purposes of contact tracing. Public transport may be used subject to the use of facemasks.

6. Supporting adults (child sport)

Supporting adults (1 per child) attending match play or training should observe physical distancing, should not shout and should role model COVID infection control and good sports-personship. Referees or coaches should require parents not adhering to these principles to withdraw from the touchline.

Supporting adults should minimise physical contact between their children before and after matches or training sessions

7. Refreshments and hospitality

Post-match or post-training refreshments may be provided but must adhere to local principles of COVID security for shops. Food and alcohol must be table service only, and contact lists must be taken.

8. Spectators

Casual spectators who are not members of the coaching or administrative team or parents of players should not be admitted to the ground or building. Tickets should not be issued. In public open spaces referees and coaches should be enabled to disperse any crowds or individuals not adhering to physical distancing, and if necessary, stop play until compliance is achieved.